



James Bonnell Esq.



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MORAL TALES.

Translated from the French of

M^{de} LE PRINCE DE BEAUMONT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. II.



L O N D O N,

Printed for J. NOURSE, in the Strand, Bookseller
to His MAJESTY.

MDCCLXXV.

MORAL TALES

Translated from the French of

M^{re} LE PRINCE DE LIEPONT



II

L O N D O N

Printed for J. Johnson, in the Strand, Bookeller

to the Admiralty

1804

MORAL TALES.

THE TRUE POINT OF HONOUR, Continued.

*A Letter from Mr. NORTHON to the Countess
of SOLMES.*

HOW generous you are, madam,
in making offer of so precious a
favour as your friendship, to a
person entirely unknown to you,
and who has no other title to your regard
than what he derives from compassion ! This

consideration renders your goodness yet more conspicuous. You afford comfort to a heart that is consumed with affliction ; you restore it to hope ; you furnish the means of realising the prospect of happiness ; you instruct me in the conduct I ought to pursue, at a time when I stand in need of advice. Though a Frenchman by birth, receiving my education in Spain, I have learned to adopt the good and bad qualities of the people of that country. Being endowed with great sensibility, I embraced with eagerness the romantic ideas of the Spaniards, with respect to the female sex. Among them gallantry is an affair of the greatest importance ; they are fond of the women even to madness. The genteeler kind of men adore their mistresses as they would a divinity, and never attempt to seduce a woman whom they may entertain hopes of marrying. Wisdom is in their eyes the most alluring charm. I never had any other idea of real love, nor have I ever endeavoured to prepossess my son on this subject. His heart is as romantic as my own, and may serve to exemplify the epithet which they bestow in France on the most honourable attachments. This is the reason

MORAL TALES. 3

reason that prevented me from exercising any authority over him in the article of marriage. I was so much persuaded that he would soon become tired of a girl who is so contemptible in my eyes, that in supposing the misfortune to take place, which you seem to apprehend, it would be irreparable if my consent was necessary for remedying it. What! would a foolish girl have such ascendancy over him as to purchase, at the expence of his honour, the privilege of entering into an alliance with a reputable family! Would marriage be a suitable retribution for her base behaviour! I would sooner put my name to my son's dead warrant a thousand times, than subscribe to such an engagement. I would not be shocked at his alliance with a girl of no extraction or fortune, provided that she was honest, and had the requisite qualifications to make him happy. There is no question of my being averse to such a marriage; an unsuitable match is not to be approved of; but a really unsuitable match is that by which a person of virtuous principles is united with one of the contrary disposition.

Pardon me, madam, I cannot consider this marriage as possible, without being discomposed. There is ground however to hope that I shall have no occasion to use my authority for preventing my son from concluding it. Judge whether I be right in this opinion, madam, from the inclosed letter, and my answer to it.

A Letter from young NORTHON to his Father.

It is with the greatest submission that an ungrateful and guilty son presumes to confess to you by writing, those irregularities in his conduct, which he has not the assurance to acknowledge by word of mouth. Guilty even at the time when my heart glows with the most lively sense of your goodness, and when I sacrifice every thing to duty. Whence happens it, that after such a sacrifice, my mind is penetrated with the most torturing anguish and remorse? Oh! my tender father! teach me to know my own heart, and extricate me from the deplorable situation into which I am plunged. But, tell me, when I resolve on communicating to you my dismal secrets, may I
flatter

flatter myself with the hopes of your indulgence? Take pity on an unhappy person who resigns himself to misery, and would prefer death to a cure, the very thought of which fills him with horror.

I might no doubt have avoided my ruin had I made you acquainted with my situation. Before this fatal secrecy I was accustomed to conceal nothing from you. I know not whether you observed the pain I felt at perceiving you betray a kind of antipathy when you first beheld miss Erlac. I saw too clearly that you was not pleased with her appearance. This observation, joined to my timidity, threw me into great embarrassment, when after coming under an engagement to her mother, I was obliged to offer my hand to her whom I supposed to be Eliza; and I behaved in her company with a reserve, which she may justly consider as very unaccountable. While we were sitting on the terrace I was grieved to see her beautiful eyes bathed in tears, which she endeavoured to conceal from me. Ah! miss, said I, with an emotion which discovered the state of my heart, to what cause ought I to

attribute the tears that I perceive you now shed ? Am I so unfortunate as not to be agreeable to you ? Does your heart refuse to ratify an engagement which would be the greatest happiness of my life ? Speak, I conjure you ; I feel, that after seeing you, it is absolutely impossible not to love you ; but if my passion gives you offence, and your affection is attached to some more fortunate lover, it shall be my utmost endeavour to sacrifice my happiness to yours. Next to the happiness of being beloved by a woman whom we adore, the greatest is that of sacrificing our own inclination to her's.

You imagine that you love me, Northon, replied miss Erlac ; I will not dissemble that there is nothing in the world I value so much as your affection ; and you could not possibly doubt the truth of what I say, had I the courage to confess what I have done to make you sensible of it. But, alas ! I fear that what you consider as love, is a sentiment which is founded on nothing else than the obedience you owe to your relations. Destined from your birth to marry the daughter
of

of baron M—, the duty arising from this engagement supplies the place of affection ; you regard me only as a person belonging to your friend. I have unquestionably no other charm in your eyes, and had I not the honour to be his daughter, you would behold me with perfect indifference. Banish that injurious delicacy, answered I. I freely acknowledge that I am charmed to find my duty coincide with my inclination ; but how unhappy would I be, had the case been otherwise ! My feeble virtue could scarcely have supported the struggle.

What ! replied miss Erlac in transport ! If, not having the honour of being the baron's daughter, my heart had been seduced by my eyes ; if, possessing a handsome fortune, I valued it only for the sake of bestowing it on you ; if my affection for you had induced me even to employ artifice to prevent your being united with my rival, would you pardon the means to which I had recourse for rendering myself mistress of your heart ? I would not deserve your taking so much trouble about me, said I to her, somewhat surprised ; but I think that what

you have mentioned would increase my affection, if I can suppose it capable of being augmented ; because these circumstances would be a proof of an attachment which I would purchase at the hazard of my life. Would that no person now observed us, that I might testify on my knees the gratitude which I feel for these agreeable suppositions ! Ah ! charming Eliza, my heart will never forget them ; the excess of your delicacy enchants me ; and if by a miracle you could cease to be what you are, you would nevertheless be eternally the object of my love. Yes, in the most abject condition of life, I would have the comfort to behold in you a person who loved me independent of the considerations arising from duty ! How often have I sighed in secret, from the apprehension of not obtaining your hand but out of regard to the desire of your father ! You have at last dispelled my doubts ; I am now the happiest of men.

I made a motion to seize the young lady's hand, but she withdrew it, and casting her eyes downwards, said : hold, and know that you are in a mistake ; I am not Eliza. I
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can assure you with truth, that she has no advantage over me in point of birth, fortune, or perhaps of beauty. The extreme affection with which you have inspired me, has induced me to have recourse even to stratagem, to insure me of your heart. Can you be so cruel as to punish me for a fault which proceeds from the love I have for you? Alas! I atone for it too dearly, by the shame that attends my acknowledgment.

I remained motionless for some time, without speaking a word; so that miss Erlac had an opportunity of telling me how my picture having made an impression on her heart, she had gained over the servant whose loss we so much regretted, and that giving him her picture with a letter under the name of Eliza, he had found means of conveying it to me without your knowledge. What shall I tell you, father? The account of this transaction proved that she entertained such a violent passion for me as merited my love in return; I swore eternal fidelity to miss Erlac, and promised never to have connection with her rival. My respect for you

would not permit me to proceed further. I had the resolution to tell her that I never would dispose of my hand without your consent ; but I added, that I had reason to hope for every thing from your tenderness. She approved of my obedience, in a manner that convinced me of the regard she entertained for virtue. I recollected the condescension of my grandfather towards you in a similar case ; the baron was indebted to him for Leonora ; and who knew better than he the power of a reciprocal and virtuous affection ? I could not be persuaded that he had any intention to abuse the authority which gratitude gave him over us, by rendering Eliza and me unhappy. These reflections, which I communicated to miss Erlac, seemed to console her ; but she entertained another apprehension which she did not dissemble. She was jealous of the charms of Eliza ; and this appearing to be a proof both of her modesty and affection, entirely overcame me. I called Heaven to witness my constancy, and swore by the most solemn asseveration that I never would marry any other than herself.

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I convinced miss Erlac that there was a necessity for my dissimulation, till I should find a favourable opportunity of declaring my sentiments to you. She acquiesced in the propriety of such conduct; and seeing you advancing towards us, her countenance changed all of a sudden. The soft languor which had been conspicuous in her eyes gave place to an air of approbation for having so well conducted the little deceit, about which she talked so agreeably during the time of dinner. I know not how I then looked; it is probable that I was much out of countenance. It was evident from the joy that appeared in your eyes, that you was pleased at the certainty of having been deceived. What further happened I need not inform you, and shall therefore only mention the fluctuation of mind which I perpetually experience ever since that fatal moment.

However much I was prepossessed in favour of miss Erlac, I own to you that I was dazzled with the beauty of Eliza. I express myself badly, but mean to say that her beauty, perfect as it is, struck me less than the modesty, the candour, and all those vir-

tues which seemed to be painted in her heavenly countenance. Permit me to use that expression, as it alone can convey a proper idea of my sentiments. My examination, however, was very superficial; the tender looks of Eliza reproached me for those which I cast on her cousin. My heart continued faithful to her; but the opposite emotions which I have felt since that time have greatly tormented me. My mind has been at variance with my senses, and I found no other remedy in so singular and uneasy a situation, but by redoubling my assiduities towards miss Erlac. How melancholy was the following night! how sad have been the days that succeeded! Abandoned to my own reflection, in that night which I never will forget, miss Erlac's conduct appeared to me in its genuine colours. Reason holding up to me a torch, if I may be allowed to use the expression, forced me to draw a comparison between the two persons who had been offered to me; and what perhaps never happened to any but myself, I was convinced that she whom I did not love was superior to her whom I adored. Every day, every hour confirmed me in this persuasion, not-

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withstanding all my endeavours to the contrary. Love, which pleaded strongly in favour of miss Erlac, rendered me unjust; I flattered myself with the hope of finding faults in Eliza which would excuse my infidelity, and perhaps induce you to favour my passion for her cousin. Vain was the hope; every day I discovered new blemishes in the one, and a thousand perfections in the other. Miss Erlac, from whom I could not conceal the respect with which the great qualities of her rival had inspired me, reproached me tenderly for it. For God's sake, father, condemn her not on account of a step which I am obliged to inform you of. I was daily beset with company, and could not find a moment's leisure to spend with her. She therefore devised the means of my seeing her every night, through the assistance of one of her women; but modesty and discretion presided at our interviews. This woman was always present; and it is but justice to miss Erlac to say, that it was only the violence of her affection for me which induced her to such conduct, where-with she reproaches herself as if it were a crime.

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I believed at this time that it was impossible my situation could become more distressful, but I was soon convinced of my mistake ; it was reserved for Eliza to make me completely wretched. All the endeavours I used to conceal my correspondence with her rival, could not escape her. Shall I acknowledge it to you ? Her penetration seemed to be that of a lover ; and so far was I from being uneasy at having inspired that divine girl with sentiments which I was not in a condition to return, I found inexpressible pleasure in the thought of becoming the object of her affection. This depravity of my heart shocked me ; I reproached myself with it as a new crime. How great was my confusion, my shame, and my remorse, when I understood by her letter that what I had suspected was certain ! However much her expressions were guarded, they discovered the sentiments of a delicate lover, who sacrificed every thing, even her own affection, to the happiness of the person she loved. Widely different were the dispositions of miss Erlac. She must naturally have foreseen the many bad consequences that would result from the passion with which she studied to inspire me, yet.

yet she preferred her own gratification to my happiness. Pardon me, my sweetheart, I forgot myself, I injure you ; but my heart will give you satisfaction, and remains more faithful to you than ever. Miserable captive that I am ; I groan under the weight of my chains, I water them with my tears, and yet would incur death rather than break them. This unhappy passion is become necessary to my existence ; and my heart, distracted by two objects which pull it forcibly in contrary directions, sees nothing before it but an endless train of misfortunes, determine which way it will. Yes, my father, I am the devoted victim to a species of misery which has hitherto never been experienced. I ought to appear as a monster in the sight of Eliza ; yet I am convinced that she loves me, however unworthy I am of her esteem. In reality, should I succeed in breaking the bands that attach me to her rival, I could offer her only a perjured heart. What dependence could she place in the faith of a man who would have violated former engagements ? What do I say ? Have I not already violated them ? Have I not had the temerity to inform this adorable girl
that

that I loved her? Me to love her! at the time when every night I renew the most solemn declarations that I never will have any connection with her; that I will renounce all obedience to paternal authority, which enjoins the contrary; and that I will trample on the most sacred obligations of gratitude to the baron. Ah! my father, you have brought up a monster that is destined to prove the torment of all who have been so unfortunate as to love him. I am a horror to myself, and must certainly be such to others.

In the midst of these cruel agitations one ray of hope yet darts upon my eyes. Miss Erlac has assured me that you are sensible of the charms of Eliza, that she returns your tenderness, and that you only wait for the arrival of her father, to ask her hand in marriage. This discovery allayed my inquietude; I would never be completely miserable, while I could partake of the happiness of persons whom I so much love. Alas! I know not as yet all the caprices of my heart; I had the assurance to reproach Eliza for the seeming inclination which she
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discovered towards that union. Jealousy in all its rage took possession of my soul. I could not think of either marrying her myself, or seeing her given to another. Once more, father, what a monster have you formed? How much I fear left to all my other misfortunes there be added that which I would yet consider as the most horrible; I mean your hatred and curse! Deserve them I certainly do, but I never would survive them. It was the apprehension of incurring them that restrained me till now from breaking silence; and I never would have had the assurance to acquaint you with my situation, had not miss Erlac informed me that you had already discovered it.

Take pity on your unhappy son, my indulgent father; permit him to go and conceal his shame in the extremity of the world. God has hitherto preserved me from falling into the lowest depth of error. Notwithstanding the ascendancy which miss Erlac has over me, she has not been able to extort a promise that I would marry her without your consent; and how can I dare to hope for this proof of your indulgence? Ah!
could

could you penetrate into the bottom of my heart, you would yield to my inclination out of revenge. I never can enjoy happiness with miss Erlac : her temper would render me miserable every moment of my life ; but I would look on myself as obliged in honour and gratitude to marry her, even could I cease to love her, or at least not to marry any other.

Let me intreat that you will yet grant me one favour. I have not the courage in your presence, to support myself under the reproaches with which you have a right to load me. Be pleased to answer me in writing, and to let me know that if you no longer have a son, I yet continue to have a father.

Mr. NORTON's Answer to his Son.

YES, dear Northon, you yet have a father, and you now restore to him his son. Why did you not open your heart to me sooner ? How much anxiety would I have saved you ! Could you possibly forget that
you

you have always found in me a sympathising friend, and not a severe superior? An excess of delicacy has forced me to be silent with respect to your errors; I wanted that yourself would acknowledge them. It gives me satisfaction that you have at length made the confession, though it comes a little late; and if I feel any regret at the delay, it is chiefly on account of the pain you have suffered, and which it might have been in my power to alleviate. Let me begin with assuring you, that in the capacity of your counsellor I shall entirely throw aside the right with which nature has intrusted me, as your parent. The business is an engagement of a permanent nature, on which depends your happiness in this life, and perhaps in that to come. Besides, it is you who are to engage yourself, not me; and it is therefore fit that you have your own choice. I solemnly promise that I never will insist on your fulfilling the engagements which I came under for you: they were conditional, and founded upon the supposition that you would voluntarily ratify them. With respect to those which you have made without my consent, your friend requests
that

that you will coolly deliberate on their nature and consequences; your father likewise desires it. It is a duty which it would be criminal to decline. It is the only act of authority that you have to fear from him. I shall tell you then what I think should be the objects which I intreat that you will consider maturely.

In the first place, it is proper that you consider what are the sentiments which you ought to entertain with respect to miss Er-lac, in consequence of her behaviour.

Secondly, what those are with which she has inspired you, and whether they be insurmountable.

Thirdly, the force of the engagements into which you have entered with her; and how far they are obligatory in the sight of God and man.

It is necessary likewise to enquire whether these engagements are compatible with your other duties; for an oath which would oblige you to violate the divine laws, can have

no

no validity. Even to pronounce such an oath is a crime ; but to adhere to the performance of it, would be a yet greater enormity.

Lastly, it is necessary to examine what you owe to yourself. Nothing can absolve you from the well-governed love which we owe to ourselves ; from the obligation of seeking our own real interests, and preferring them to those of others. This is the law of nature.

Gratitude is a duty which a heart that is well-disposed will always consider as sacred. A person who has done us a good office, or has even an inclination to do it, deserves our grateful acknowledgments. On the other hand, religion alone can induce us to pardon those who have done us harm. Is it in the class of your benefactors or your enemies that you ought to rank miss Erlac ? She has boasted of the great fortune which she would bring to you ; but if fortune be a real good, don't you perceive that she would deprive you of it ? The riches she possesses bear no proportion to those of her
cousin.

cousin. God forbid that I should desire you to be determined in this consideration, in an engagement in which religion and honour alone ought to be consulted. I only mean to shew that you owe nothing to miss Erlac in this respect. She proposes to you an exchange of the greater for the less. Should you make such an exchange all the gratitude ought to be on her side ; for unquestionably the sacrifice would be on yours.

She first loved you, and this is the consideration that so violently engages your heart. She has given you the strongest proofs of her affection by stooping to acts of treachery, to lies, to a disregard to decency and her own reputation. Certainly these are great sacrifices ! It is necessary to enquire whether it be to you that she has made them ; and if it be not her desire that you should return them by sacrifices yet more important.

In examining the conduct of this girl, I clearly perceive that she loves herself very much ; she thinks you more fit than any other

other to promote her happiness, and has therefore spared no pains to seduce you, without entertaining the smallest regard for your interest. She well knew that you could not make the suitable return to her tenderness without becoming ungrateful to the most generous of all your friends, and wounding the heart of the most affectionate of fathers. Of consequence she has wanted to render you miserable, by making you partake of her guilt. But if she be of opinion that people may be happy in violating their duties, she must be a girl void of principle, who could only lead you to the commission of crimes. You are sensible yourself that she ought to have foreseen the pains to which she exposed you : conclude therefore that she really does not love you, and that the idea of your happiness has no place in the desire which she entertains of being united with you. She is willing that you be miserable during the remainder of your life, provided that her passion be gratified.

Eh ! tell me, do people reflect when they are in love ? Does a girl of her age naturally

rally amuse herself with lecturing ? She follows the dictates of her heart, which is blind in love, as in every other passion. She feels that she cannot be happy without me ; she persuades herself that I cannot be happy without her ; she considers our interests as inseparable.

Would my son be capable of making such a reply ? Would he consent to be united with a girl who is governed entirely by passion ; who has yielded without any resistance ; and suffers herself to be so hurried away, that she is incapable of reflection ? That passion which could not be produced by esteem, because by your acknowledgment it operated blindly ; that passion, I say, might it not one day break forth in favour of a new object ; would it pay any greater regard to the rights of a husband than to those of a father ? You are not the first youth of whom miss Erlac has been fond ; are you certain that you would be the last ? What dependence can you have on the constancy of a weak mind that is incapable of resisting itself ?

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I have proved that miss Erlac has done nothing that can merit your gratitude and affection. I have gone further, and shewn you that she has sacrificed your fortune, your reputation, your duties, to the desire of satisfying herself. I will repeat my former question, Whether is it among your benefactors or enemies that you ought to place her? But if your delicate heart be so very sensible of benefits, as to be seduced by what has only the appearance of them, consider, if you can, how much you owe to Eliza. She is the model of real love. She has not bestowed the smallest reflection on the inclinations of her own heart, since first she suspected those of yours. *Be happy, it matters not with whom.* This is the meaning of her letter. She has done more than sacrificed her inclination to you, and you are the cause of the greatest fault she ever committed. Nothing in the world is more dear to her than the esteem and friendship of her father, her aunt, and, I will venture to say, of me; yet she determined to risk both the one and the other for accomplishing what she conceived to be your happiness. She was willing to refuse your hand, to appear

refractory, to incur the hazard of a suspicion that she was prepossessed in favour of another ; in short, she would have done violence to all her sentiments, rather than see you engaged in a marriage which was in the least degree repugnant to your inclination. It is true that she yielded to the arguments which were used with her on this subject. Our reputation is a good that we cannot dispose of at pleasure. To sacrifice it voluntarily, and without the most urgent motives, is criminal. She is incapable of such an action ; but her heart regretted the severity of the duty which prevented her from serving you at the expence of her own happiness. Recollect the comparison that you made between her conduct and that of her cousin ; I cannot too often put you in mind of your own reflections.

The heart is not master of itself, you will tell me ; Eliza will always gain by a comparison, but I adore miss Erlac. I am of opinion that you exaggerate to yourself your own sentiments ; you have never been in love ; a slight scratch appears to you as a deep and incurable wound ; like a person that

that is unaccustomed to the sea, who considers as a dreadful storm, such an agitation of the waves as excites not the smallest apprehension in an experienced sailor. If you would judge of the consequence of your malady, recollect the coolness with which your tender father has observed the progress of it. He knew you too well to apprehend that you would be entirely overcome; he was convinced, and still remains firm in the persuasion, that the moment you hear the austere voice of duty, this shadow of a passion, the remembrance of which will give you pain, will vanish as a dream from your mind. It is virtue alone that forms durable connections; for such as derive their origin from one fit of caprice, terminate always in another. I am of opinion that you stood in need of this lesson, with respect to your conduct. All that had been told you concerning irregular affections, had but slightly touched your mind; you did not conceive how a man, who was endowed with religion and a good understanding, could be brought into subjection by means of the senses, without the concurrence of reason, and even in opposition to her dictates. It was necessary

that you should be instructed at your own expence. You will soon be in the way of a happy recovery ; but I would not promise that your cure will be sudden, unless I was certain of your perfect docility, or had less interest in the consequence.

Yes, my son, all depends upon the means that you use for being cured, which I will not prescribe, because I will leave to yourself the honour of the victory.

Remember the coolness of Edward III. when he was asked for a reinforcement of troops to assist the prince of Wales, his son, in an engagement with the French. He refused granting the succour, saying, *It is proper that the boy gain his spurs to-day.* You agreed with me, on reading this passage of the English history, that Edward could not have behaved in this manner, had he not been confident that his beloved son would obtain the victory. This is my maxim, my dear friend. You are serving your first campaign, and must gain your spurs. I am certain that the moment you have examined your new engagements, their inconsistency with

with your most sacred duties will excite in you the requisite courage for conquering with facility. Of this you will be convinced, if you attend to the reasoning that follows.

People say a great deal of invincible passions and irresistible inclinations. It is true that man is a very feeble creature when left entirely to himself ; yet we daily meet with instances of violent propensities being surmounted from a motive of honour. A man may have a desire to rob another of his property, but is restrained from carrying it into execution by the fear of disgrace. You have more certain resources, of which you can and ought to avail yourself, without neglecting, however, what has now been mentioned. Suppose, my son, that you had met with Eliza at Bourdeaux, and had married her without either inclination or repugnance, merely from the gratitude which we owe to her father ; that on your arrival at Paris, miss Erlac, or any other girl a thousand times more accomplished than her, had inspired you with a passion proportioned to her merit ; would you think you was at

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liberty

liberty to resign yourself to that amour, notwithstanding your previous engagement? You would shudder at the thought of so enormous a crime; and yet you are actually very near being guilty of it. Contracts are necessary only among people void of probity; the word of honour is a sufficient obligation to those who are actuated by principle. In the eyes of such, a voluntary promise has all the validity of the most solemn engagement, and they would submit to any thing rather than violate it. This is the situation in which you stand with respect to the baron, and his virtuous and charming daughter. You have a thousand times ratified the engagement which I entered into for you; your reason has raised no objection against fulfilling your promise; you are come to Paris with the view of accomplishing it; can you yet think yourself at liberty to break it? The baron considers himself as so inviolably engaged with us, that he has refused the most advantageous settlements for Eliza; and to the proposal of her marrying the viceroy, he returned only this reply; I cannot dispose of my daughter, she is engaged. This is what I myself would have answered,
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had I been offered an infant for you. Hear what I beg you will say to yourself and miss Erlac, when she speaks of the accomplishment of your promise and vows : I was not at liberty to make them ; an inviolable engagement fixed my lot before I had the honour of knowing you. These first obligations have greater validity than the second, in as much as they were entered into with the consent of him who, by the law of nature, has the supreme authority over me. It is true that this indulgent father will never exert his power in binding me against my own inclination ; but he will not think it right to authorise me in an action which would tend to my own dishonour.

On reading this part of my letter, you will probably exclaim : then all is over, I find an inexorable master. No, my dear son. I will not dissemble that I would rather see you dead than that you were married to miss Erlac ; I assure you, however, that I will not oppose your union with her, provided that you consent to a delay, which I ask as the reward of all my cares for you. Is it that after such a delay I would consider

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you

you as free? No, only you would not desire to be it more. At present, you behold miss Erlac with the eyes of a lover, which have the property of some perspective glasses, that diminish objects when you look through them by one end, and magnify when you view with the other. Does a man set about spying the faults of a woman with whom he is in love? He immediately uses the glass by the end which diminishes objects: but is he to look at her perfections; he inverts the instrument. You ought to consider, my son, that I view her without glasses, and by this impartial experiment she gains nothing. You have observed some inequality in her temper; and for my part, I perceive that she is capricious to the last degree. She is haughty, imperious, prepossessed in favour of her personal endowments, intoxicated with a high opinion of her understanding, her rank, and her fortune. Those faults, however, I consider as trifling in comparison with another, of which I shall inform you ere long, if you do not discover it yourself. I forbear to mention it now, because I would not that this artful girl should have time to prepossess you. I conclude with begging you to re-

member,

member, that in me Providence has favoured you with a sincere friend; fail not to improve this advantage. But if it be too painful for you to communicate to me by word of mouth the emotions which my letter excites in your mind, continue to make use of your pen, and I will answer you in the same manner.

Your father and friend,

NORTHON.

Had the evil been less urgent, I would have waited for your opinion of this letter, madam, before I sent it to my son; but there would be danger in delay. I know his heart, and I don't think that he will prove refractory against the method I have taken with him. I am to lay it on his table, that I may humour his weakness, and he will find it at going to bed; he would be too much affected should I give it to him out of my own hand. As the post does not depart before ten o'clock to-morrow, and my son rises early in the morning, I may perhaps have time to add a postscript, to inform you of what effect my letter has produced upon him.

*A LETTER from Mrs. NORTHON to
the Countess of SOLMES.*

EVERY thing that I feared and foresaw has happened, madam. We are here in a most frightful confusion, and would have set out, had not the night been too far advanced. Our hopes are vanished; the loss of my nephew is no longer doubtful, and by the time you receive the letters which my brother wrote to you concerning him, his misfortune will probably be completed. I scarce know what I am writing; I ought to wait some hours before I finish my letter; I am to blame for being in such haste to give you pain; but you must excuse one whose heart is torn with affliction, and who can communicate her distress only to such a friend as you.

We are in our new apartment; the baron has obliged his daughter to go to bed; and he has himself yielded to my solicitation that he would take an hour's rest. My brother is in search of his son; I am alone, giving
vent

vent to my sorrow, which in a few hours I must suppress, in order to support the courage of others. Behold misfortunes which no human prudence could either foresee or prevent, at least considering the distressful circumstances by which they are aggravated.

I told you that miss Erlac was promised to the marquis of V—. This young man, who is descended of one of the first families in France, by living extravagantly, contracted debts which exhausted the greater part of his estate; and a ray of good sense having enlightened his understanding, he resolved to enter upon a more prudent way of life, after settling his affairs by an advantageous marriage. Mrs. Erlac, charmed with the thoughts of repairing, by a great alliance, the fault which herself had committed in marrying a man of low extraction, received with joy this nobleman's proposal, and her daughter acquiesced in it without the least reluctance. Her new passion made her determine on breaking her engagement; but as the marquis would probably be absent till the end of the campaign, she flattered herself that her marriage with my nephew would be

concluded before his return. I don't know for what reason the marquis hastened to come back ; perhaps he has here some spy, who sends him an account of all that passes ? However this may be, Mrs. Erlac received a letter at supper, by which he informed her that he would return very soon, and begged that she would have every thing prepared for the marriage against his arrival ; because he could stay at Paris only eight days, whither his general was to send him to transact some business. The lady, after running over the letter, thought she owed us the compliment of reading it aloud, as we all were acquainted with the project of the marriage. This fatal confidence discovered at once the various sentiments which we entertained. My brother and I testified our joy in so unreserved a manner that miss Erlac was offended, and cast at us a look that began to open the eyes of her mother. The blush which diffused itself over the countenance of my nephew and Eliza, was such as if they were animated with exactly the same sentiment. Their emotion proceeded from regret ; but that of Eliza related to my nephew ; she felt for him as strongly as he

he did for himself, without having any regard to her own interest, which was secured by this marriage. Mrs. Erlac looked on all of us with an air of surprize; and after a moment's silence she turned towards her daughter, in whose countenance despair and indignation were mixed, and said to her, explain to me the cause of what I perceive, and which I dread to enquire into. I expected emotions of a different kind from you, daughter; the time approaches that will unite you with an amiable man, for whom not two months ago you discovered a great regard; and now that so advantageous a match is to be completed, you seem to be sunk in despair. This marriage, which properly concerns only you, excites in all who are present such lively sensations, it is easy to perceive that they take a greater part in it than can be supposed to proceed from mere friendship. Once more, I desire you will explain to me this mystery. Miss Erlac immediately threw herself down at her mother's feet, intreating her to break off the engagement into which she had entered with the marquis, and assuring her that she would sooner die than consummate that marriage.

The

38 MORAL TALES.

The eyes of my nephew filled with tears ; and Mrs. Erlac after looking at him with indignation, addressed herself to her daughter, and said to her, I understand you, miss ; but can you imagine that I would carry my complaisance so far as to break my promise to the marquis, for the sake of giving you away to an obscure and needy adventurer, who, transgressing the laws of hospitality, has made use of the civility I shewed him to seduce you, and that at a time when my brother, forgetting the distance that fortune had placed between him and his daughter, consented to give her to him ?

My brother is one of the most moderate men in the world ; he would have pardoned the disobliging terms in which the lady expressed herself with respect to his fortune, and even his extraction ; but could he restrain his anger at hearing his son accused of seduction, when he was really the victim of it ? I was afraid therefore that he would make a very sharp reply, which was just ready to break out, when we heard a loud knocking at the door of the house ; and in the very instant when Mrs. Erlac was giving orders

orders not to admit any person, that we might not be seen in our present situation, the door of the apartment was in a manner burst open, and a man very plainly dressed entering, cast a look round the company, observed miss Erlac, and immediately rushed into her arms. You will be of opinion that no other person but baron M— was entitled to use such freedom. His sister knew him from this behaviour; whilst Eliza, by a kind of natural instinct, returned her father's embraces. He quitted his daughter's arms to receive our salutations; and during a quarter of an hour we were in the most agreeable confusion; all our uneasy thoughts were suspended, and we were wholly devoted to the enjoyment of our present happiness, when a look which was cast at my nephew, threw me again into all my former disquietude. He was upon foot, leaning on the back of Eliza's chair, and directly facing miss Erlac. No criminal, at hearing the sentence of death pronounced upon him, could betray a look of greater consternation. The baron at length observed it, and said to my brother, what means the confusion that I perceive in the countenance of our son?

son? He seems to be confounded at my arrival. My brother, stammering, knew not what reply to make, when Mrs. Erlac put an end to his confusion in a very disagreeable manner, and said to her brother: it is that you could not have arrived at a more unlucky time; you disconcert the schemes of the gentleman and my daughter, who, both forgetting their duty to us, have agreed between themselves on a marriage which shall never take place while I live.

My nephew did not wait to hear Mrs. Erlac's discourse. Unable to support the weight of his confusion, he went out of the room as soon as she began to speak. The baron no sooner inferred, from Northon's behaviour, what his sister wanted he should know, than he burst out into a transport of rage. They despise such a girl as my daughter; they have the assurance to prefer——He stopped abruptly, and looking at his niece with indignation, discovered how little qualified he thought her for entering into a competition with his daughter. Mrs. Erlac, who knew the meaning of his look, was touched with it to the quick. I could not
have

have imagined, said she to him, that your indignation would be excited at the choice which this young man has made ; it does honour to his discernment ; and was it not that I consider him as the seducer of my daughter, the preference which he has shewn for her above your's, would interest me in his favour, and induce me to overlook other considerations. At these words miss Erlac caught hold of her mother's hand, which she kissed several times. This behaviour, and the discourse that occasioned it, inflamed the baron's resentment to the highest pitch. Follow me, said he to his daughter, and let us not stay one minute longer in a house where you are despised and betrayed. You will do me pleasure in quitting it, said Mrs. Erlac to him, and that you may be at liberty to depart in the morning, I leave you.

She immediately went out with her daughter. For a great while after her departure the baron walked up and down the room in such an agitation that we spoke not a word. At length becoming more calm, setting himself down beside me, and taking hold of his daughter's hand and mine, he said : my dear

dear Mrs. Northon has no share in so black a treason ; to despise my daughter, seduce my niece, to embroil me irreconcilably with my sister ; who could suspect that a young man whom I thought so virtuous would be guilty of such crimes ? Eh ! you, my friend, said he to my brother, is it possible that such an intrigue could escape your penetration ? And if you did discover it, how happens it that you have not used all your authority to stop its progress ?

My brother, by way of reply, put into his hand the letter which Northon had written to him that morning, while I was to lay on my nephew's table the answer that his father had returned, and which, had it not been for this unlucky accident, the unfortunate youth would have received. She shall see the copies of them, and you will be convinced that they fully acquit my nephew of the charge of seduction. The baron appeared to be softened in his favour, and looking at his daughter, who seemed as if she was desirous to obtain his pardon for a person for whom she had so great a regard, he said to her : you love him, my dear Eliza ;
I know

I know it from those looks, which plead his cause with so much eloquence; but is he worthy of your tenderness after giving the preference to a creature so greatly inferior to you? While he spoke, his eyes surveyed her with a complacency that for a moment yielded me satisfaction. The caresses of Eliza, who kissed his hand while she bathed them with her tears, entirely restored his tranquillity. Rise, daughter, worthy of better fate, said he to her; a speedy repentance may induce me to forget Northon's fault; the poor youth has been entangled in the snare that was laid for him. I perceive by his letter that he is sensible of his error; but he must not hesitate any longer about resolving what measures to follow; and should he persist in affronting your accomplishments by encouraging so injurious a competition, he may expect all the resentment of a father who is touched in the most tender part. Pardon me, my dear friends, said he to us, holding forth a hand to each; I know how much you are interested in the offender. I perceive that his behaviour gives you as much uneasiness as me. You have spared no pains to bring him back to his duty.

duty. The means you have used, I doubt not, will prove successful ; and this consideration should make me restrain my reproaches ; but a father who is in my situation is entitled to some indulgence ; and I therefore flatter myself with your's. We continued engaged in such conversation till three in the morning ; and a servant, who was acquainted in Paris, went at break of day to engage an apartment for us. He soon found one that was convenient. My brother slipped out under the pretence of seeing whether we would be rightly accommodated ; but his true motive was to seek for his son ; return him his letter, and find how far he could rely upon his repentance. Alas ! he has just now left me in a kind of despair ; he has not been able to find what is become of his son, and is again gone in quest of him. God grant that he may prove successful in his enquiry. Fatal voyage ! I would say from the bottom of my heart, was I not taught by faith that trouble and crosses are the means which lead us to heaven. When viewed in this light they become supportable ; but I am still far from the Christian perfection of undergoing them with pleasure.

Eliza desired, at going to bed, that I would inform you of her misfortunes. She has not had the resolution to write you concerning them herself, nor will her time allow of it.

*A LETTER from ELIZA to the Countess
of SOLMES.*

THEY think I am now sound asleep, and I take the opportunity of my dear friend's being in that condition, to acquaint you with a misfortune which, as yet, she knows not of. Things are in a desperate situation, madam : for three days that we have been here, we have not once seen Northon, which greatly exasperates my father. How much more would he be provoked, did he know the whole affair ? He asks me twenty times a day if I would refuse to sacrifice to his tenderness my unworthy lover (these are his very words, and they wound me to the heart) ; I answer, with tears, that he may dispose of me as he pleases, that he never will find me oppose his inclination, and that

I will

46 MORAL TALES.

I will use all my endeavours to forget Northon ; but that I cannot say with sincerity I hope to succeed in the attempt. What ! my dear girl, says he, embracing me, can you yet love a person who is guilty of ingratitude and perjury ! I answer, he is not guilty either of the one or the other, father. Have you not seen from his letter what a lively sense he entertains of your goodness ; and how much he regrets the engagement into which he has entered with my cousin. He thinks he is bound in honour to fulfil his promises, and has not yet read the letter in which his father attempts to remove his scruples on this head. His only motive for not coming near us is, that he is afraid of being induced to violate his engagements. You see how ardently he desires my happiness, though he knows not the affection I have for him. I have carefully avoided making any confession of that kind to him ; nay I am of opinion that he doubts of my regard, and this is what makes him unhappy. He has not imposed upon me by the faint protestations of a passion which he did not feel ; he freely acquainted me with the situation of his heart. Poor child, replied

plied my father, I know the greatness of your affection from the eloquence you use in his behalf. But, pray, are you to be affronted, and will you not consent to our taking revenge ? I can make you one of the greatest ladies in France. Oh ! what pleasure I would have in seeing him pine with grief for having lost you ! My dear father, said I, I am going to acknowledge to you a fact which will make me appear in your eyes as guilty as him. The first day that I saw him, without knowing who he was, I loved him almost as much as I do now. It is true that I did not abandon myself to this emotion, and was going to quit Paris, with the consent of my dear friend, that I might disengage my affection from a person who was not of your choice ; but at length I yielded to the inclination. This knowledge of my own weakness makes me sympathise the more with him. I would have triumphed over mine, he will triumph over his, if heaven has destined us for each other. As soon as I understood that this pretended marquis was the person you designed for my husband, I no longer restrained my heart. You ordered that I would give it him ; I have

48 MORAL TALES.

have accordingly done so, and would obey you yet further, if it were in my power ; but I am fully persuaded that it is not. Be contented with my good will in this matter ; however ineffectual this may prove, I find that people can dispose of themselves but once, and my affection is fixed for life.

Our conversation on this subject always ended with my embracing my father's knees, and giving him hopes of an alteration which I no longer expect, as the unhappy Northon is on the point of completing his ruin and mine. Judge of it by the inclosed letter which I have just now received. It is not subscribed, nor need it be so to make me understand that it comes from the waiting maid, who is my cousin's confidant. For this time she performs a piece of real service to her mistress.

An anonymous Letter to Miss ELIZA.

Miss,

WHATEVER report may be propagated in a certain house, you seem to me to be a good and honest person. For this reason I thought

thought I would run no hazard in acquainting you of some things which it is fit you should know. Let me beg, however, that you will shew this letter to nobody but Mr. Northon, and that he will not speak a word about what it contains. My reason for requesting this secrecy is not that I am afraid of any bad consequence ; my intention is good I assure you ; but I would not chuse it to be thought that I meddle in other people's affairs.

Miss Erlac dotes so much on her Mr. Northon, that she has declared to her mother she will neither eat nor drink, till she consents to her marriage with this beautiful Adonis, who has nothing engaging about him but his figure, which to be sure is passable enough ; for I am none of those who are inclined to speak ill of people they do not like ; I give every person their due. Mrs. Erlac at first imagined that her daughter said this to frighten her ; but on observing that she had neither breakfasted, dined, nor supped, the day you left the house, she began to be afraid in good earnest,

and came into miss's chamber. To cut the matter short, the daughter so managed her mother that she consented to every thing, but only, she said, from the motive of vexing her brother the baron, and letting him see that her daughter would always be preferred to his puppet; for this is the name she gives you. But, my dear child, added she, what shall we do with the marquis? There is no way so proper for ending the affair with him, as hastening the marriage with Northon, replied miss Erlac. People soon submit to what cannot be remedied; leave it to me to manage all that, and ere long you will see my uncle vexed to the heart. He deserves our resentment for daring to speak in so insolent a manner of a girl who has the honour of belonging to you, and bears your resemblance, who excels his Eliza a thousand times.

Mrs. Erlac could not resist the force of such arguments as these; and her daughter can twist her which way she will by flattering her on the score of her person, with respect to which she has certainly no pretension to the smallest degree of vanity; for
this

this lady never has been handsome ; and if at present she appears passable, we know very well——but we should not speak all that we know ; let us return to what I was saying. Mrs. Erlac then ordered Northon to be sent for, who was not a great way off ; but as it was improper she should know that he had not gone out of the house, they delayed a little while introducing him into her apartment. The poor waiting maid, who kept him concealed in a closet, pulled him out greatly provoked, as she told me. As she has entirely the ear of her mistresses, the marquis of V—— recommended his interest to her care at his going away. Oh, madam ! he is perfectly a lord ; he makes no more of giving money, than if it was water out of the river ; and the girl of whom I speak has got the promise of a handsome settlement, if the marquis shall marry her mistress. She wrote to him to return with all speed, if he would prevent a young spark from supplanting him. He will arrive very soon, and our ladies will be put much out of countenance ; but his arrival would certainly be too late, if, by good luck, this Northon was not one of the silliest fellows

in the world. Would you believe that this beggarly cub, who is not worth the coat on his back, as they say, would act the lofty gentleman? But you will not be offended at this; it was said that he was going to marry you. Poverty is no crime, and he may be a very deserving gentleman for all that. I forgot what I was about to say—O yes, it was that he will not marry miss Erlac without his father's consent, who says that he never will give it. Now she grumbles, then she weeps, and afterwards she reproaches Northon for the thought of marrying you. To this discourse he replied not one word, but remained motionless. At length, miss taking a perfume box out of her pocket, gave a puff to her little dog, of which she is extremely fond; the poor creature was almost immediately seized with convulsions, and expired. Northon appearing to be astonished at what had happened, she told him that if he continued to entertain such scruples, she would swallow what remained in the box, and die in his presence. At this terrible menace the poor youth was thunder-struck, and throwing himself at her feet, he promised to do whatever she desired. She then

then sent to call one of the gentlemen who are the friends of her mother and her, and who had been her confidant in the whole affair. I could lay a wager that he did not act in that capacity for nothing; but let us not judge uncharitably. Mrs. Erlac also arrived. They spoke so low that I could hear but a few words of what they said. I imagine they have a design of going to England, where the match will be concluded, because, if the marriage was celebrated in France, Northon would get it dissolved. The confidant will accompany them. Madam will appear in a great passion, that the family may think the affair is contrary to her inclination; she is afterwards to be appeased, and the father likewise is to be reconciled; this is what I can learn of their design. But when, and in what manner, they are to set out, I cannot say. It is certain, however, that there will be a fine squabble, if the marquis arrives before their departure. He is not a person that will tamely suffer an affront.

O! strange letter! O! what an unaccountable creature my cousin is! May God

preserve poor Northon from her artifices. How is it possible that the poor youth can resist such assaults? Unfortunately, I did not receive this letter till I had taken leave of my father, and had gone to bed. Mr. Northon is not yet come in, and I cannot shew it him before to-morrow. What a miserable night I shall pass! Twenty times have I thought of disclosing the whole to my dear friend, and of begging that she would wait on her brother, that we may resolve this night what must be done. The smallest delay is undoubtedly dangerous; it is possible they may set out before to-morrow. I am just going to awake Mrs. Northon, and she will determine whether we ought this very moment to procure an order for fetching back her nephew.

Mrs. NORTHON proceeds.

WHAT a horrible alarm have I had to-night, my dear countess! My brother did not return till two o'clock in the morning. He was told that his son was with a young man of his acquaintance, who declares that he has not seen him these four days. As
he

he suspected the truth of this information, he seated himself in a coffee-house opposite to where the gentleman lived, where he remained till after all the company were gone. We have consulted together about what measures it is proper to take, and have determined to apply in the morning to the lieutenant of the police, for an order obliging Mrs. Erlac to send Northon back to his father. They say it is in the power of this magistrate to grant such an order; and as he is a very polite man, we hope he will comply with our request on so delicate an occasion, where we wish to preclude an event which would expose Erlac to all the world. She does not deserve so much attention from us, God knows. Oh! religion, what will not people perpetrate who are deaf to thy sacred dictates? If the wicked only knew from what danger it preserves them, by restraining the passions of those who observe its precepts, they would love it from a principle of gratitude. This is a reflection of my brother's, who declares that he would strangle Erlac with his own hands, was it not that his fury is restrained by the fear of God.

*A LETTER from the Countess of SOLMES
to Mrs. NORTHON *.*

THIS letter will be delivered to you by my valet de chambre, whom I have ordered to make as much haste as possible ; though I know that it will arrive too late. The marquis of V—— has the start of him by twice twenty-four hours, and you will see him at Mrs. Erlac's at a time when he is little expected. As it is not impossible, however, but he may have some business that will retard him, I thought it my duty, at all events, to inform you that he is not ignorant of having a rival at Paris, and that he is determined to make him let go his hold. It is proper, therefore, that your brother should not leave his son a single moment. Although the marquis has, by sad experience, acquired a moderation to which he submits with difficulty, I fear lest your ne-

* It must be observed that the countess had not received Mrs. Northon's last packet, when she wrote this letter, and consequently that she knew not of her having left Mrs. Erlac's house, nor of the other incidents therein mentioned.

phew,

phew, who cannot yet be supposed to have so much prudence, should expose himself rashly in a duel. It is unfortunate that I did not know of his departure till an hour ago. He informed us that he intended staying some days at Dijon, and I therefore thought I would have time to acquaint you of his arrival by the post.

I have caused Eliza's picture to be drawn in the richest manner possible; it is in a bracelet. It is the most splendid part of my dress, and attracts the attention of all who behold it. At first they admire the elegance of the workmanship; but when they cast their eyes on the painting, they can look no longer at the frame. Our law-suit being happily terminated by a marriage, we have been much engaged in feasting; an old colonel, who has quitted the service some years, gave a grand entertainment to our young folks. Just as we were sitting down to table, there entered an officer in boots, who was introduced to the new married couple as a relation to the master of the house. I was at that time with a lady in the next room, and did not join the company till the

moment they were seated. They addressed the stranger by the title of colonel, and I did not think of asking his name. In the midst of the entertainment, as I was reaching something to my friend, the stranger took notice of my bracelet, and seemed desirous of viewing it attentively. I receive too much pleasure in hearing the praises of Eliza, not readily to grant the satisfaction of examining her picture, to those who express any desire to that purpose. The gentleman, after viewing it attentively a great while, exclaimed, it was impossible there could be so great a beauty, and that the painter had certainly improved on the original. The old colonel, taking the gentleman by the hand, and returning the bracelet to me, said: if we may credit report, madam, the copy is inferior to the original; but, what is very extraordinary, this beautiful lady has been deprived of her lover by a person of your acquaintance! I was informed of it by a letter last night; guess, if you can, the name of her who had the boldness to dispute a conquest with this matchless beauty. Can it be Er-lac, replied the colonel? I have received intelligence of her infidelity to me, and this is
the

the cause of my leaving the garrison four months sooner than I intended. I have solicited, and obtained a commission from the general to transact some affairs, which will detain me at Paris a sufficient time to conclude my marriage with this lady ; for I cannot imagine that her mother would chuse to break the engagement she has made with me. I wrote to her three days ago to make preparations for the ceremony, without mentioning a syllable with respect to what I had been informed of ; and I am really of opinion that they wanted to alarm me, in order to induce me to a speedy conclusion of the match.

And you consider the matter in this light, said the old colonel to him, striking him on the shoulder : in truth, my friend, you have an admirable disposition for a husband ; continue to doubt of the matter, and your sweetheart will be taken out of your hands. But there is a little difficulty in the affair. Your rival's father has contracted him with the charming girl whose picture you admire, and the old gentleman is one of those who would as soon be torn in quarters as break his

word. This young lady is the daughter of baron M—, who has come from the extremity of America to conclude the match ; so you may rest secure, not in the fidelity of your princess, but in the impossibility of her marrying her Adonis, who is not of age to resist his father's authority.

Eh ! the goodness of his disposition will not allow him to do it, replied I, briskly ! I am very intimate with all the family, and can affirm that, if there be no other person to dispute miss Erlac with the gentleman, he may look on his marriage as concluded. This lady is very amiable ; but she has too much prudence to suffer herself to be captivated with a young man who is already engaged. This report owes its rise entirely to a piece of pleasantry ; and here I related to the company the trick which was played on the day that Mr. Northon arrived.

I hastened to justify Erlac, from an apprehension lest the old colonel should give his friend a distaste of her. My apology seemed not to satisfy him, and he shook his head with an air that expressed he knew as

much of the matter as I did. I imagine it is a marriage of interest, in which the heart has no share. But is it not very strange, my dear friend, that all our secrets should be divulged in this manner at the distance of thirty leagues from Paris? This can happen only by means of the servants; and I much fear lest this amour will be the first news they will tell the baron at his arrival. It would be lucky that Erlac's marriage were concluded before that time.

The young colonel went away as soon as the desert was produced, under the pretence of having business to transact at Dijon, and I have heard nothing of him till this evening, that I saw the old colonel's lady, who informs me that her husband's conversation made greater impression upon him than it seemed to do, as he went off immediately after. This is the reason of my now dispatching a courier to you. The post does not set out before to-morrow, and the delay of one quarter of an hour might be productive of bad consequences. The best thing to be done, in my opinion, would be to resume our old project. Devise an excuse for
coming

coming to see me. Set off directly; this will be taken less notice of, than if you should stay any time in Paris after leaving Mrs. Erlac's. Say that I am very bad; it will not be telling a falsehood; for I am quite in a fever, with thinking what may be the consequence of the meeting between the colonel and Northon.

*A second Letter from the Countess of SOLMES
to Mrs. NORTHON.*

WHAT hateful projects! how are all our schemes disappointed! I cannot enjoy a moment's ease till I know the issue of this adventure. All my hopes are placed in the resolution which you signify, by the letters I have just now received. There is great work here about a *lettre de cachet*; I hope Mr. Northon will procure one.

Ah! my God, what misfortune have we reason to apprehend? The colonel's lady went out, and has obtained permission of her husband to give me a letter that he has received from his friend. I here send it you;
for

for I have not the resolution to transcribe it. I am half dead with reading it. My God, avert the misfortunes that I fear.

*A LETTER from the Marquis of V—
to Mr. ——— late Colonel of the Regiment
of ———.*

I PROMISED to send you an account of my adventure with Erlac; I keep my word; and in the uncertainty how the affair may end, I am to desire that you will give me your assistance in some business which I have not time to look after.

You know well enough that I never had any affection for Erlac; her fortune is considerable; I had need of an advantageous marriage to repair the loss which I have sustained by the follies of my youth. This match was proposed to me; and being thoroughly convinced that the women of the present age are not educated in such a way as to render the married state happy, I own that I overlooked the caprices which I discovered in the character of this creature, who is, otherwise, passable enough. My
rank

rank dazzled the mother and daughter ; the former had sacrificed German pride to the desire of being rich ; the latter is ambitious, and was flattered with the thought of a match that would introduce her to court. Our marriage was delayed till the time when I expected to obtain the rank of a marshal of the army. A little acquaintance with Erlac convinced me that she was fickle and capricious ; I was therefore afraid that during my absence some other suitor would start up, to whom her fortune would be as desirable an object as it was to me. The facility with which I had succeeded in my addresses increased this suspicion ; so that I bethought me of the expedient of keeping a spy about her, who would inform me of every step which she took. By bribes and promises I purchased the friendship of a favourite waiting-maid, who has sent me an account of Erlac's infidelity, accompanied with such aggravating circumstances, that my interest in her fortune has yielded to the desire of revengé. This is the only reason of my journey, which I concealed from you, because you seemed to be too much connected with one of this creature's friends, whom

whom I really despise so much, that I would not accept of her hand, were her fortune double what it is. I own to you likewise, that the apprehension of her eluding my revenge, through the information she might procure from this friend, induced me to set out abruptly with acquainting you, and have killed two horses by riding so hard. All that I wanted was, to oblige her lover to renounce her in my presence, and then to declare that she did not deserve to bear the name of any gentleman. I was confirmed in this resolution by what my confidant told me when I arrived, as soon as I had repeated my promises, whether the marriage should take place or not. The recital she gave filled me with abhorrence of this vile creature, and compassion towards the youth whom she has seduced. He is a fine puppet, said she to me ; soft, timid, devout, and easy to be overcome. I thought I would perform an essential piece of service to the young man's family by the action I meditated ; which was to confound Erlac in his presence, and make him ashamed of his attachment for her ; not imagining that the affair could have any serious consequences with

with a youth of eighteen. You know that I have formerly, in some unfortunate affairs, given proof of my courage ; and am now of an age when a reasonable man, so far from seeking after subjects of quarrel, ought to make all the submission he can, without wounding his honour. The maid told me that her mistress concealed Northon in the house. During the day time he was shut up in a closet, and in the night his Dulcinea caused him to be brought into her room. She told me farther, that she had some suspicion of an elopement ; and in the apprehension that I would not arrive in time enough to prevent it, she had the same evening sent intelligence to the young man's father, by an anonymous letter. All these circumstances concurred to favour my design. I obtained leave of the maid to place myself in a wardrobe close to Erlac's apartment, from whence I could burst out when I thought proper, to confound her. My scheme has but too well succeeded : I found Northon (this is the lover's name) more melancholy than amorous, and I concluded that an elopement was really intended, and would be carried into execution the next night.

The

The most lively joy sparkled in Erlac's eyes, and she endeavoured to communicate her emotion to the heart of her lover, who did not appear to enjoy the satisfaction she felt. This imprudence raised my indignation to the highest pitch; I instantly sprung out of my ambush, and regarded not in what terms I spoke to her. Her confusion testified her sense of guilt; I did not give her time to recollect herself, but immediately addressed my discourse to Northon: young man, said I to him, thank your tender age, and my compassion, which prevent me from giving you a lesson that might have cost you dear.

My youth will not hinder me from giving you an useful advice, and one of which you seem to stand in need, replied Northon, with a modest, but determined air; it is, that a gentleman ought never to insult a woman; that such behaviour is cowardly, as she has no other defence than her tears; and had the place been proper, I would make you repent of your rudeness. These words seemed so little to correspond with the mildness of his countenance, that I stood amazed. To do Northon justice, his principle was certainly

tainly right, and he did nothing but what a man of spirit ought to do on such an occasion. I therefore could not help contracting an esteem for him, and this induced me to enter into an expostulation. I agree with you, said I, as to the respect which is due to the sex ; but when a woman forgets herself so far as this—Say not one word more, Sir, answered he, interrupting me. It is a maxim of mine to protect those who are abused, be they what they will. Much less can I suffer an insult to be offered in my presence, to a lady who is dear to me in more than one respect. I repeat, that, was it not for the regard I owe the house in which we are, I would endeavour to impose silence upon you in a more peremptory manner. You are neither the lady's father nor husband, and have no right to criticize, or even to enquire into her actions. If you acquiesce in what I say, you will atone, as becomes a gentleman, for such improper behaviour. Retire, Sir, and if you be offended at my discourse, I assure you that I will delay for eight days a journey which I was just a going to take. I never will be the first to attack any person ; God, my reason, and my king, forbid
that

that I should ; but if any person attacks me, no duty can oblige me to be passive. If you attempt it, Sir, you will find, that though I be solicitous to spare your life, I know how to defend my own.

Imagine, Sir, that you behold Doucet in Le Glorieux, and you will have an idea of this scene. It was with an air of the greatest tranquillity that the little man delivered this discourse ; I call him a little man, though his stature is of the largest size ; because, were he dressed in women's clothes, he has not down upon his chin to discover his sex ; and I thought it very extraordinary to be so treated by a child. I therefore absolutely lost patience. You have too much presumption, said I to him, when you imagine that I would do you the honour of entering the lists with you. We all know what sort of discipline is proper for children who forget themselves, and you may depend on receiving it. On pronouncing these words I instantly put on my hat, and was for going out the same way by which I entered, when taking me by the arm, and squeezing it in such a manner as to leave a mark, he said : it is
the

70 . MORAL TALES.

the part of women to threaten, but of men to perform ; as to the rest I would have you know, that it is more easily said than done.

My passion became ungovernable ; two or three times did I put my hand to my sword, not recollecting that he was unarmed, and that at the first appearance of a combat, the shrieks of the women would bring all the people in the house into the apartment. I went out, pouring forth the greatest menaces against a man who appeared not to understand them, so little seemed he to be affrighted. On returning to my lodging, it was more than an hour before I could determine how to act. My passion being abated, I was not so unjust as to condemn the young man : he had given me the most provoking insult ; but his situation was such, that he could not have behaved otherwise, without exposing himself to disgrace. His conduct merited my esteem, rather than resentment. I could not but admire his courage in so young a man ; and had the scene happened in private between ourselves, I believe I would not have hesitated to ask pardon, and beg to be favoured with his friendship. Yes,

I do assure you, I would sooner have acknowledged that I had been in the wrong, than have fought with him. An unlucky prepossession did not allow me to follow my own judgment; the two women might represent the affair in the worst light. Five duels that I have fought, and fifteen years service in the army, would not save me from incurring the imputation of cowardice, for suffering such an affront. I therefore resolved on giving a challenge to this young man, and had just set down to write to him, when I received this billet.

NORTHON'S *Billet.*

THERE are certain circumstances that induce one to break the strongest and most prudent resolutions. I have always held duels in abhorrence; but you, Sir, have put me in a situation of surmounting my aversion. The honour of miss Erlac demands a reparation proportioned to the outrage which you have offered her. Resolve, therefore, either to ask pardon of her, on your knees, in the presence of the waiting maid and me, or let me know where you may be met with

to-morrow morning. You shall have the choice of the weapons. I expect your answer,

NORTHON.

The Marquis's Answer.

You have anticipated me, Sir. I had taken up my pen, not to make any apology for my behaviour to Erlac, who deserves double the reproaches I uttered, but to let you know that if any word escaped me which you construe into a reflection on yourself, I offer you the satisfaction due to a man of honour. I will wait on you to-morrow at five in the morning, in the wood of Boulogne; I shall be alone, and will have no other weapon but my sword.

The Marquis of V—.

Don't you wonder at the style of this billet? It almost looks like an apology for the young man, and I am surprized when I reflect upon it. It was the effect of the great reluctance I felt for this duel, from which my mind foreboded bad consequences. In fact,
had

had I carried the victory, I would have been unhappy all my life after. You may conclude that I will treat with great caution this respectable youth, for whose death I never would forgive myself. All I intend to do will be to disarm him, without seeking to derive any other advantage from my experience in a trade in which he is only a novice, and wherein I have been but too successful. However, as there is no absolute dependance to be placed on any thing, and the event of war is always uncertain, I send to you with this letter an account of my debts, which I beg you will discharge in case of any accident. Adieu, my friend. Did I entertain any fear, I place so much confidence in you, that I believe I would tell you of it; but my sentiments are quite of another nature, and I cannot well describe them. I sincerely wish both my legs broken to night, that I might avoid the duel to-morrow.

A LETTER from Mrs. NORTON to
the Countess of SOLMES.

I RECEIVED both together the letter you sent me by the post, and that which your courier has brought. You was right, my dear countess, in thinking they would come too late to prevent the horrible misfortune that has threatened us, and the thought of which makes me shudder. God only could assist us, and we have experienced his goodness in an extraordinary manner, as I will inform you by the return of your courier. I am to detain him a few days to refresh him after his fatigue, which has brought a feverishness upon him. I send you this to acquaint you that we are very nigh the point of seeing all our troubles terminated. To give you a detail of the means which have forwarded this happy period, requires more time and tranquility than I have to-day; but I could not leave you in the anxiety which your tender friendship for us would make you suffer.

A second

*A second LETTER from Mrs. NORTHON
to the Countess of SOLMES.*

WHEN I wrote the billet which you would receive two days ago, I was in fear of losing my nephew; the surgeons could give no positive opinion respecting the consequence of his wounds. They have now pronounced him to be out of all danger, so that I can indulge the hope of more serene days, and am desirous of communicating to you our joy, after making you partake of our unhappiness. I don't know what my brother has wrote to you by your courier, from whom we carefully concealed our misfortunes: he assures me that his letter was couched in such a strain as not to give you any uneasiness. — I have received your letter; you ask me for a full account of every thing; the good news which they tell you of, are delivered with an air of embarrassment, which gives you a suspicion of their truth. I am not in the least surpris'd at this, my dear friend; I even wonder how we had the resolution to write at a time when we were under the

most dismal apprehensions ; but a happy day has at length succeeded these disasters. If you would have a proof of it, know that the following recital comes from the mouth of that dear nephew, who has undergone a total change both of body and mind. The marquis of V——'s letter left you in the most critical place ; Northon being hurried away by resentment so far as to give a challenge. My hand shakes in writing these terrible words. Behold by what degrees he had advanced to the last stage of blindness and guilt.

Miss Erlac, that she might have the longer time to see Northon, affected to be indisposed, and kept her apartment eight hours ; so that it was but nine o'clock when the marquis went out, which was the hour when Mrs. Erlac sat down to table, and when all the servants were in the hall. The daughter, astonished at the marquis's appearance, was unable to speak a word ; when her amazement subsided she fell into a transport of rage, the effect of which would have been felt by her waiting-maid, had she not made her escape. This woman, enraged at her
mistress's

mistress's bad treatment, and mad with the thoughts of losing her pension, notwithstanding the marquis's promises, determined on revenging herself in the most signal manner.

You know that Mrs. Erlac, as well as the rest of the family, were entirely ignorant of Northon's being in the house, and that he passed the days and nights in it. This mischievous creature, willing to divulge the secret, said to one of the footmen, run directly, and tell madam that her daughter is dying; I am going to call a physician. The man, in a fright, rushes immediately into the hall, and without any preamble tells Mrs. Erlac the news, who runs to her daughter's apartment, followed by all her family. The mother started back affrighted on seeing Northon at that hour in her daughter's chamber. You will be shocked with the effrontery of this creature. She sat in an elbow-chair, leaning her head on one of her hands, and said to her mother: how have you been so quickly informed of the danger I have run, and which must inevitably have overwhelmed me, had not Mr. Northon, surprised at finding your door open at this hour,

followed the secret impulse which directed him to come into my apartment. But I ought to tell you in private what has happened ; send away the servants, and order the doors to be bolted. The infamous creature, who has escaped with her accomplice, may possibly have false keys, and we have every thing to dread from her despair. Northon was amazed at the assurance with which she told this false story, and he has confessed to us since, that had he not at that moment been blind to conviction, he would have avoided the excess into which he fell ; but it was necessary that he should be brought to the brink of the abyss to know the depth of it, and that he might employ the remainder of his life in thanks to the Divine Mercy, which saved him from falling in so slippery a path.

When miss Erlac was alone with her mother, she trumped up a story that appeared very probable. Her waiting-maid, corrupted by the marquis, had introduced him into her apartment ; he had used every means to force her to sign a contract of marriage, under the forfeiture of a hundred thousand livres. Ren-
dered

dered desperate by her refusal to comply with his request, he threatened to commit the most violent outrage ; and with the assistance of the treacherous wretch his accomplice, he attempted to stop her mouth with a handkerchief, when Northon providentially entered, and obliged him to make his escape.

She had scarce finished her recital, when Mrs. Erlac, addressing herself to Northon, said to him : so great an outrage cannot be effaced but by the blood of the marquis, and I imagine you are a gentleman of too great spirit to leave to any other person the charge of avenging us. Northon replied, that according to the received opinion of the world, the marquis could not dissemble the haughty and insolent manner in which he had reproached him for the excess of passion he had shewn ; that unquestionably he would desire to have satisfaction, nor would he be backward to give it him ; but that he could not think of sending a challenge, as such an action appeared to him unjustifiable by reason, as well as contrary to the laws of God and of the land. At these words, Mrs. Erlac, in a transport of indignation, looking

at her daughter, said to her : I imagine your mind is too noble to entertain the least spark of affection for a coward, a man who is destitute of all honour. This is the consequence of the foolish indulgence that I have shewn for your weaknesses ; but don't expect that I will carry it any further. Either this gentleman must resolve on demanding satisfaction of the marquis, or by break of day you shall be removed to an obscure retreat, to repent of the fault you have committed in stooping to such a person as him. I will allow him only a quarter of an hour to determine, added she, laying down her watch on the table ; a longer delay would render him unworthy of ever being my son-in-law. On saying this she went out of the room, but left the door open, and walked up and down the next apartment in great agitation.

Northon remained motionless, and so far from thinking of adopting the resolution that was required of him, he has told me that he was plunged into the utmost confusion, and agitated with a thousand ideas, which succeeded each other with as much rapidity as the waves of the sea in a storm, without
his

his being able to contemplate any of them distinctly. Erlac awaked him out of this lethargy by a spectacle which his heart could not resist. He beheld her laid at his feet, bathed in tears, begging him for a life which she could not support, after the loss of her reputation. She could not possibly recover it but by his marrying her; she had been discovered alone with him in her room; her waiting woman, who had betrayed them, would represent their private meetings in the most unfavourable light, though she was conscious of their innocence; the report would be confirmed by the marquis, and her confinement in a convent would be considered by the public as a proof of her guilt. Ah! exclaimed she, taking him by the hand, if I do not prevent, by a violent death, the infamy and pain to which you seem to devote me, and will soon be consumed with shame and remorse in the convent where my mother is about to place me. You will reproach yourself, when it is too late, with the death of a person, whose only crime was her excessive love of you.

I have told you that I had these particulars from my nephew's mouth. Although he is now radically cured of the unhappy passion which was within an ace of ruining him, he could not refrain from shedding tears, while he thought on the situation of this unfortunate girl. Judge of the condition to which he was then reduced. His heart was not formed to resist so violent grief, in a person whom he had so much loved, and of whose unhappiness he was the cause. Holding forth his hands to her, and fetching a deep sigh, he said : you triumph, miss : it will cost me my life ; but, at least, I alone will be miserable. Having replaced her in the elbow-chair, he told Mrs. Erlac that he was ready to do what she thought proper, and he wrote in her presence the challenge, of which you have seen a copy. He asked leave to retire into his mistress's closet till she would give her answer, where he wrote the following letter, which my brother received at six o'clock in the morning, as he was going out to the lieutenant of the police.

A L E T-

A LETTER from Mr. NORTHON, junior, to his Father.

You have often repeated to me that people never stop at the first crime they commit, and I am now sensible of the truth of your observation, from sad experience. I will not give you a detail of my transgressions; they are such that I don't deserve your sympathy. Forget an unhappy wretch, who, notwithstanding he entertains the most respectful and tender sentiments for you, has carried his ingratitude to the utmost length that it can proceed. Yes, Sir, ready to lose my life, either by the hand of an enemy whom I provoke to the combat, or upon a scaffold, the inevitable consequence of a duel; what I chiefly regret is, that I have darkened with grief the days which I would willingly have rendered serene at the expence of my life. I die penetrated with gratitude for the goodness of the baron. Ah! I was unworthy of the inestimable present that he destined for me, and Heaven owed the virtuous Eliza a husband more capable of making her happy. I felt the full power of her

virtues and her charms ; but a heart sullied with a dishonourable passion was no longer worthy of being offered to her. Alas ! she will weep at my unhappy fate ; and this consideration, so far from abating the horror of my last moments, would add to my misery, if it was not already at the highest pitch. I repeat what I wrote to you once before ; I am born to be the cause of unhappiness to all who belong to me. How will this letter pierce the heart of Mrs. Northon ! May she employ all the influence she possesses over the mind of her pupil, to render her thankful to God for the good fortune of having escaped such a husband, who, notwithstanding his unworthiness, will adore her to the last moment of his life.

In a few hours your son will be blotted out from the number of the living, or lodged in the hands of justice. My guilty lover will not reap the fruit of the crime which she forces me to commit ; and if my antagonist falls, I will yield myself up to the greatest severity of the laws, to avoid the unhappiness of being her husband.

NORTHON.

Judge, my dear, of the condition to which such a letter reduced my brother ; I own I was distracted on reading it. Northon probably had taken the precaution that we should not receive this letter till after the hour appointed for the duel. To have recourse to authority, in such a case, was to expose him to the pursuit of justice. The presence of the baron, who with his daughter entered the room, redoubled our affliction : it was necessary we should restrain our tears, and conceal, under an apparent tranquillity, the most violent agitation. My brother, unable to support the disguise, withdrew ; I made a pretence of having something to say to him, and stopt him on the stair, to know what he was determined to do. In my confusion I dropt the fatal letter, which I thought I had put into my pocket. The baron, who amused himself with the books that lay on my table, did not observe it. Eliza taking it up, and knowing my nephew's hand-writing, could not resist the desire of reading it. She has since told me that she expected to find in it an account of his marriage with her cousin, and that she had resolution enough to stand the shock of
such

such tidings ; but at the thought of her lover's death, especially a death of so violent a nature, her courage totally forsook her. Her natural sensibility painted to her in so striking colours, the horror of dying in consequence of having perpetrated a crime, that the thought almost deprived her of life. She fell on the floor insensible, and for an hour shewed no other signs of life than terrible convulsions.

What anguish have I not suffered this dismal morning ! I had to support the sight of this dear girl expiring, the despair, and the reproaches of her father. The excess of grief rendered him unjust, and for several moments he forgot all the obligations he owed me, at the remembrance that I was the aunt of the unhappy youth, whom he accused, with reason, of being the cause of his daughter's ruin ; for, through the terror into which I was thrown by the situation of Eliza, I never once thought of taking up the letter that had produced this incident, and he read it. In any other case, my grief would have excited his compassion ; but his own was at this time so excessive, that it
shut

shut his heart against every other sentiment. At seven in the morning her pulse became more calm : the physician and surgeon caused her to be sprinkled incessantly with the coldest water that could be procured ; they even put pieces of ice into it, to render it more efficacious. This strange remedy at length produced an effect that I could not have expected ; she opened her eyes, and observing me among those who surrounded her bed, in a languid tone enquired, Is he dead, my dear friend ? Is his eternal misery irretrievably completed ?

A sort of mechanical motion impelled me (for I have not the vanity to think that I was inspired, and my regard to truth would not permit me to tell a falsehood) I pronounced, as it were involuntarily, these words : he lives, my dear child, and that only to repair his faults, and love you. Amazing effect of paternal love and tenderness ! These two words produced a sudden change on the father and daughter. A blush that spread over Eliza's countenance, dispelled the shades of death, which seemed to surround

88 MORAL TALES.

surround her : her eyes became lively, and never before did they shine with more extraordinary lustre. She seated herself with all the vivacity of a person in good health, and stretching to me her hand, Ah ! my mother, said she, if he lives and repents, I will bless the grief that he has made me suffer ; I will reflect with pleasure on the pain I have endured ; all is pardoned and forgotten. She then raised her beautiful eyes towards heaven, and in a fervent prayer returned thanks for the miracle which had been wrought in our favour. The baron, at this unexpected alteration, approached his daughter's bed-side, gazed at her in silence, as if he would devour her with his eyes, and checked the indulgence of his tenderness, that he might not interrupt his beloved child in her communication with Heaven. All who were in the room felt themselves penetrated with respect ; they imagined that the presence of the Almighty was manifested in a particular manner amongst them. The apartment seemed to them a great temple, where he desired to be worshipped ; they all fell down on their knees, not excepting even the physician and surgeon. After praying fervently some minutes,

minutes, Eliza, with a charming smile, thanked us for joining in her acknowledgments to the Divine Mercy, and held out her hand to her father, with the desire of touching his. The baron, unable to restrain himself any longer, threw himself upon her, loads her with caresses, and testifies his emotion in tears of joy. At this proof of her father's tenderness, the heart of Eliza was moved with sympathy, her tears and sobs mingled with his and mine; she could but half articulate her words, and I began to fear lest she should relapse into her former condition; but the physician removed my apprehension. She is in no danger, said he; allow her emotion a free course; the indulgence of it will in a short time relieve her.

The baron, as soon as his apprehensions respecting Eliza were abated, recollected the sharp manner in which he had spoke to me; and the goodness of his heart would not suffer him to delay one moment the making amends for his fault. How much am I indebted to you! said he, kissing my hands. You restore to me my daughter; complete my tranquility by pardoning me for the unjust

just reproaches which I was so base as to utter against you. Taking me afterwards aside, how, said he, shall we support the deception that has recalled her to life?

The dread, or rather certainty of the greatest of misfortunes, did not permit me to resign myself to joy at Eliza's recovery: had I not reason to apprehend a relapse, as soon as she would be informed of the truth? I was telling my fears to the baron, when a servant came and informed my brother that a countryman wanted to speak with him in the next room. These words were scarce pronounced when my heart was overwhelmed with horror; and had it not been for the fear of exposing Eliza to certain death, I never could have supported the condition in which I now was; for I firmly believed that they were come to acquaint my brother with the death of his son. This apprehension so much affected me during the few minutes my brother was absent, that I am surprised to think how I have survived it. No, madam, it is impossible I can suffer more when my soul shall be separated from my body. A cold sweat broke out all over me, in so great a degree,

a degree, that my clothes were wetted through in a minute. I do not exaggerate, madam, the water run out at my shoes, and the floor was covered with it. A thick cloud overspread my eyes, and a sudden paleness manifesting the state in which I was, made Eliza scream out. My good friend is dying, cried she to her father ; for God's sake lend her your assistance. In fact my legs tottered, and I scarcely could mutter a few words, to make her understand that my illness was the consequence of the fright I had received. The baron placed me on Eliza's bed ; the physician held some volatile salts to my nose, and the surgeon rubbed my temples. Eliza had not strength to support the sight, and was just on the point of relapsing into the terrible situation, out of which she had scarcely recovered. The return of my brother produced a sudden change in this mournful scene. His eyes sparkled with joy ; he held in his hand a paper which he loaded with kisses, and he was so much transported that he did not observe my weakness. I then felt another emotion more dangerous than the former, and which would undoubtedly have killed me, had they not immediately opened

opened a vein. But nothing could suspend my questions, and those of the baron ; my brother's countenance testified some happy event, which we were quite impatient to be informed of. My brother asked the physician whether there might not be danger in making us pass directly from the excess of grief to that of joy, and he received this answer : all the evil that joy could produce is already experienced, and I hope it will have no bad consequences ; on the contrary, the reading of the letter which you have received may prove serviceable ; and that you may be at liberty to do it, we will retire into the next room.

This was a wise precaution, which none of us was in a condition to think of, had it not been suggested by the physician ; and my brother would have publicly told the news that transported him. I send you this blessed letter ; as I have so many things to write you of, that I have not time to copy it.

A LET-

*A Letter from Young NORTHON to his
Father.*

Sir, and dear Father,

I PRESUME at last to address you by this tender appellation. I know your heart, and am sensible that it will not prove obdurate against my repentance. If I delay throwing myself at your feet to confess my misbehaviour, it is not from any apprehension that you will prove inflexible, but that I have not time to expiate them as I ought. Never was there a man more to blame, nor at the same time more humbled, more severely punished, and more patient.

You would see by the letter I wrote to you yesterday, that, in opposition to all the laws of religion and honour, I had determined on perpetrating a crime of the blackest nature, and such as must eternally ruin both the guilty person and his accomplice. I have always regarded a duel as a sin of the most heinous enormity; and yet, such is my perverseness, that notwithstanding this persuasion I resolved on it. I will not
alledge,

alledge, in extenuation of my fault, that I was beset by a woman who had deprived me of my reason. This passion, which was my first crime, no longer existed: I was at length become sensible of the baseness of her soul, and from that time I would sooner have descended into my grave than marry so contemptible a woman. My fatal resolution was the effect of the despair into which I was thrown, in consequence of the engagements I had entered into with her, and which I thought in honour I could not violate. I left her house as soon as I received the marquis's answer: I feared lest the waiting-maid would inform you of the place where I was, and went a quarter of a league from Paris, to a village a little distant from the Chartreux, where my antagonist had appointed we should meet; and, being entered into a mean apartment, I shut myself up till the hour of our engagement should arrive. So great was my despair, that the six hours I had to pass in this retreat, appeared to me as so many ages. After walking up and down the room a great while, I endeavoured to take a few minutes rest, and threw myself upon the bed with my cloaths

on. But I was in too great agitation to hope for sleep. Here, in all the bitterness of remorse, I called to remembrance the immense space I had gone over in two months, and the fatal period that was to terminate the vicious course into which I had been imperceptibly seduced. I saw myself surrounded with precipices which I could not surmount. With the assistance of divine grace I could have hoped for relief from the horrid situation into which I was plunged; but I looked on myself as unworthy of obtaining it, and dared not even to ask it. The very thought of attempting it seemed an insult offered to God, whom I had wickedly forsaken. Perhaps, said I to myself, my letter has brought my father to his grave; I have plunged a poignard into the hearts of my virtuous friends; die, wretch, and rid the earth of such a monster as you are.—Die! but can I be blind to the consequence of so terrible a death? I could not think of supporting the looks of a father, who, notwithstanding my behaviour, still loves me with tenderness; how can I enter the presence of a God whom my crimes have rendered implacable? What wilt thou answer to

to this terrible judge, when thou art made sensible of the reasoning with which thou didst impose upon thyself? Thou darest the reproaches, and the despair of thy cruelest enemy, and thoughtest nothing of shortening the days of a father who devoted every moment of his life towards procuring thy happiness; of a friend who had adopted thee for his son; of a delicate lover, and of an aunt who lived only to bring up for thee a spouse that is worthy to fill a throne. Thou thoughtest thyself engaged by oaths: hadst thou any right to take upon thee such engagements? Hast thou not been accessory to the guilt of thy lover, who has violated the solemn promise which she had given to a gentleman? Not content with taking from him his bride, thou wouldst also deprive him of his life!

To these reflections succeeded others of a like salutary nature. For whom wouldst thou sacrifice thy honour, thy safety, and thy life? for a woman whom thou canst not but despise, even while thou lov'st her, and who, in fact, deserves all the insults which the marquis has offered to her. The regard

which is due to females is founded on the softness, the modesty, and the weakness which generally accompany them; but a woman who is so bold as to brave all decency, and trample on the virtues which ought to be her claim to our protection, forfeits the pretensions of her sex, and should be ranked among men, even of the most perverse disposition. Thou thinkest thyself disposed to renounce all connection with her if thou escapest death; but canst thou answer for thyself after the fatal experience of thy own weakness? No, base and wicked wretch that thou art, thou wilt go and feast thy eyes with the cruel spectacle of a man weltering in the blood which she has commanded thee to spill; thou wilt be weak enough to unite thyself with her, and follow her into a strange country where remorse will put an end to thy guilty life, unless that fury shall respite thee for the perpetration of new crimes. But whither canst thou go to hide thy shame, if thou avoidest the duel with the marquis after sending him a challenge? It was a great while before I could make any reply to myself; and, at length, I dared to lift my eyes towards Heaven: my under-

VOL. II. F standing

standing became enlightened, and I conceived the means of preserving at once my safety and reputation.

The Turks threaten an attack on the island of Malta; gentlemen repair in crouds to inlist under the banners of religion; let me follow their example. Should this expedition not take place, I will accompany the Chevalier Gi, who is about setting out for the East, and I will not return to Europe till I have braved death with so much courage, that they will not suspect me of having avoided this duel on account of the danger attending it.

It would be natural for me to wait till I received your leave and benediction; but I fear my own weakness, and hasten to fly a foe that is more terrible to me than a whole army.

When I inform you that I intend embarking in a hazardous enterprize, it is as much as to say, that I intend to begin by making my peace with God through sincere repentance. I will pay a visit to the bishop of

D—

D— who is gone to pass a month at St. Germain. At his feet will I lament my wicked conduct, and seek from him the hope of obtaining the forgiveness of Heaven. It is from him that I look for receiving the assurance of your pardon, and the means of carrying my design into execution. When reconciled to Heaven, I shall plunge without fear into the midst of the greatest dangers. I am sensible that nothing but a good conscience can inspire with true courage.

Your son,

NORTHON,

Note. I say nothing to you of my sentiments for the baron, and the virtuous Eliza. I long for the time when I may be less unworthy of their goodness. I desire no more than that they might behold me without horror. Assure my respectable aunt, that I would lay down my life to repair the unhappiness which I have occasioned to her.

No, the father of the prodigal never experienced greater joy than we felt at this time. However, to say the truth, I will

own that for a moment our heroine sunk below herself; but this weakness vanished like a flash of lightning. Eh! how, said she to my brother, taking him by the hand, will you suffer your only son to expose himself to almost certain death, or yet more cruel slavery, for the sake of a ridiculous prejudice, unknown to the wisest nations?—but we must not pay any regard to the inclinations of a weak and delicate girl: consent to whatever true honour requires of him on this occasion, and pardon the fears of a timid lover, who is apprehensive of losing the object she loves.

My brother made no other reply to Eliza than taking her by the hand, which he kissed in a respectful transport. She encouraged him with the assurance of her constancy, and mentioned the means of knowing the baron's intentions: for after Northon's extravagant behaviour, my brother and I could no longer entertain any hope that he persisted in the resolution of giving his daughter to my nephew.

You

You still love him then, said her father to her smiling. Do you ask me if I love him, answered Eliza? I received from you a heart that can never prove inconstant in its affection; if it was disposed of by your order, its choice is unalterably fixed. If Northon perishes in this enterprize, I will retain towards his ashes the same fidelity which you have preserved for those of my mother. I would look on my heart debased, if it could afford place to a second passion.

We afterwards held a consultation about what step my brother ought to take with respect to his son. He let us deliberate at our leisure, but had already formed his own resolution; which was, to accompany his son to Malta, in order to partake of the dangers to which he would be exposed, to moderate his valour, and to prevent him from being corrupted by the company of youth of licentious morals. We could not but approve of this resolution, though it cost us much pain. It was determined that he should set out for St. Germain's the same day, and that as soon as Eliza's heart would permit, we would go thither for a day, to give him

the satisfaction of hearing his pardon pronounced from the mouth of the baron and Eliza.

Is it not true, madam, that, according to all appearance, we had nothing more to fear but the pain and inquietude inseparable from long absence? We flattered ourselves in this opinion. Eliza tenderly thanked my brother for the resolution he had taken of accompanying his son. Her tender impatience made her ask twenty times when he would set out: she was desirous that he would lose no time, that his son might be the sooner assured of his pardon. All of a sudden we were interrupted by the noise of several persons coming up stairs, who enquired for our apartment. The baron springs up, goes into the vestibule, where he remains a few moments, and returns with his countenance much altered, informing us that his sister was taken ill, that she desired to see him, and begged that we would not quit his daughter till he returned. The goodness of Eliza's heart made her be affected with the news, and she pressed her father to set out, which he did immediately. He had scarce
left

left the room, however, when he returned, to repeat his request that we would not quit Eliza during his absence; and this he did with an air that appeared mysterious.

In truth, madam, I could almost join in opinion with those who believe that God sends us always some secret warning before any great misfortune happens. My regard for Mrs. Erlac cannot be supposed very great; and nothing but Christian charity could prevent me from considering her as our most cruel enemy. I, therefore, could not help being somewhat surpris'd at the uneasiness which seiz'd me on her account. It was so great, that after waiting half an hour patiently, I resolv'd on sending a servant to enquire how she was. I told my brother and Eliza of my design, who approved of it: my dear child even begged that I would go myself. The mind of this poor lady, added she, is in greater danger than her body, however severe her complaint may be; and from what I know of the temper of the people about her, they will call a physician, but never think of sending for a con-

feffor. Take you the trouble of defiring the attendance of the curate, my dear friend, if you perceive that she is much indisposed. You can perform this good work without my being uneasy at your abfence : for I have a great inclination to fleep ; my head is extremely heavy. Your dear brother, who has got no reft all the night, ought to be more out of order than me ; he will take the opportunity of my being afleep to repose himfelf a little : it will be enough to leave one of the women by me. I never was lefs difpofed to fleep, faid my brother to her ; if you please, I will remain in your apartment with the women that my fifter fends to us. If it is your defire, I am fatisfied, faid Eliza ; but my dear friend muft promife to awake me, if fhe has any good news to inform me of. I did give her my promife, but in the refolution of not fulfilling it : for though fhe was free of fever, fhe was fo extremely weak that the fmalleft emotion might have proved fatal to her. I caufed her take a little broth, and placed her fo in bed that fhe might be difpofed to fleep. While I was employed in this office, fhe faid to me, I have a favour to ask of you, my dear friend :

friend: Miss Erlac has done us great injury, but still she is my cousin. The poor girl loves her mother, and must be inconsolable if she is very bad: endeavour to assuage her grief, and tell both her and my aunt, that as soon as I am allowed to get up I will wait on them, if my company be not disagreeable. I could not resist the desire of embracing this generous girl; what a soul! I went out blessing Heaven for the virtues it had lavished on a child that was dear to me.

We had taken the first floor furnished of the house in which we were: three large rooms in the front were occupied by the baron and my brother. The back apartment had been intended for us, but we only slept in it, and spent the day in one of the baron's rooms, which was larger and more pleasant. The two parts of the house were separated by a great court, but communicated with each other by means of a gallery. Eliza had been carried into her father's apartment, as it was more decent, so that I had to go for a moment into my own room before I went out, being yet in my night-

cap. I was greatly surpris'd at not finding any servant in the antichamber, and more so when I observed that the door of communication was shut. As I was afraid of disturbing Eliza by knocking, I went into the court, to go up the back-stair. Again I was surpris'd ! The doors of my apartments were open, and not a soul to be seen in the first or second room. On entering our bed-chamber, the door of which stood a-jar, my God, what a spectacle did I see ! I shudder with astonishment when I think of it. I perceived my unfortunate nephew laid on Eliza's bed, with all the appearance of a person just expiring. A stranger of a genteel look sat on the bedside, holding a glass of salts to his nose, while the surgeon who had come from visiting Eliza, and two others, whom I did not know, just finished the dressing of his wounds. A clergyman and physician were standing close by, and so attentive to what was doing that they did not perceive me. My women and some footmen all in tears, some on their knees, others standing in postures expressive of the greatest consternation. I had time to make these observations at the door of the room, where I stood

stood perfectly motionless, no person observing me. The baron was the first who cast his eyes upon me, and springing forward, ah ! madam, said he, what have you to do here ? Is he dead, said I to him with a tremulous voice ? No, madam, replied he, they entertain great hopes of his recovery ; but for God's sake do you retire, and take care that my poor girl know nothing of this fatal accident. Keep your brother also with her, I intreat you ; I will inform you of the whole affair.

My thoughts being employed on an object of greater importance, in place of answering the baron, I addressed myself to the clergyman, who as well as the physician, came towards me. Have you confessed him, sir, said I ? has the unfortunate youth been able to pray for mercy for the crime that shortens his days ? Ah, Heaven ! how could he have recourse to such an action, after the salutary reflections he had made, and the good resolutions which succeeded them ?

Be easy with respect to this replied the worthy man : it was in the exercise of the

most heroic charity that this youth has been wounded, and not in a combat forbidden by the law of God. I would give my soul for his ; nothing can exceed the Christian disposition which he testified. Figure to yourself a person loaded with an enormous weight which renders him incapable of breathing, and who is suddenly relieved from it. This is a natural picture of two situations that I have known within the space of a minute. God be blessed for whatever he ordains, exclaimed I : since this child is no longer the enemy of Heaven, I am happy ; and you, baron, be under no pain with respect to Eliza. She is really taking rest ; and I was going, at her desire, to offer my services to Mrs. Erlac : my brother will not quit her, so that you will have time to inform me of the cause of this fatal accident, and do not flatter me with regard to the consequences.

We ourselves have not had full information concerning it, replied the physician. The wounds are deep, but the symptoms are favourable, and we impute the fainting fit into which he has fallen to no other cause than the loss of blood.

I perceived at this time that Northon made some motions as if the fainting was going off : we all approached his bed, and the phyfician having felt his pulse, discovered in his countenance a ray of joy that reftored our hopes. How do you find yourself, pray ? asked the young man who fat on the bedfide, with a timorous air. His pulse now becomes perceptible, replied the phyfician, and he is as well as can be expected in fuch a fituation. If no accident happens, faid the furgeon, the wounds do not appear as if they would prove mortal : they fay that the young man was always fober, which is a circumftance that ought to give us great hope ; but really thefe wounds feem to have been directed in a miraculous manner : there is not one of them by which he might not have died on the fpot, if the weapon had penetrated but a few hairs breadth farther. Ah ! fir, faid the ftranger with tranfport, you reftore life to me ; fave him, and take all that I have in the world.

Surprifed at feeing a ftranger intereft himfelf fo much in the fate of my nephew, I furveyed him more attentively ; and, not-
with-

withstanding the confusion I was in, I clearly observed that his face was extremely handsome. Northon opened his eyes, and having discovered the baron among those who were around him, he stretched out his hand to take hold of his, which he drew to his lips. Do you forgive me, said he, with the accent of a dying person? All is forgotten, my dear son, replied the baron; live to be the happiness of all those who love you, especially of Eliza. My nephew answered only by raising his eyes towards Heaven; but it was easy to perceive from the colour of his cheeks how much joy he received from the discourse. All emotion would be dangerous, said the doctors; our patient has need of rest; on saying these words they drew the curtains of his bed, and recommended to us to be silent. The surgeon, who was a man eminent in his profession, took the young man's place; and, as I was attentive to all their motions, I observed the stranger take a purse out of his pocket; I have since been informed that it contained a hundred and fifty Louis d'ors, and he obliged the surgeon to take it, telling him that this was only an earnest of his gratitude,

if

if he would promise not to quit the patient till he was out of all danger. The baron and I retired into the next room, and I asked him concerning the cause of this extraordinary affair.

You know almost as much of it as I do, replied the baron. When I left my daughter's chamber, I had not the smallest suspicion of the terrible scene I was to behold. My valet de chambre thought of telling me that my sister was indisposed, to conceal, if possible, this fatal accident; when I was on the stair head, he said, for God's sake, my dear master, be not frightened; Mr. Northon is this moment brought to the house, all covered with his blood; he is attended by a stranger, who seems more dead than alive, and who desired me to call a surgeon directly. As the person who blooded Mrs. Northon was in the antichamber with the physician, I caused open the door of your sister's apartment, and made Mr. Northon be carried into it, who has been followed by all these gentlemen. Keep a watch till the door of communication be shut, said I to him, and immediately came hither, where I found

found the surgeon employed in stopping the bleeding. Northon retained his senses perfectly; he was desirous of speaking to me, but they enjoined him silence. He then contented himself with communicating his sentiments by his eyes, which seemed to implore my pardon in the most expressive manner; and he appeared highly satisfied at the tender concern I shewed for him.

The first thing he did on being brought to the house, was ordering his servant to call a confessor, who arrived a few minutes after me. As a piece of the sword remained in his thigh, and the incisions which were necessary to be made might occasion a great hæmorrhage, he was desirous of being confessed before the operation. Going out of the room to leave him at liberty, I addressed myself to the stranger, and said to him: be so good as inform me, sir, what has been the cause of the accident that has happened to Mr. Northon, and from what motive you have been so kind as to interest yourself in him? If you be the father of this young man, answered he, can you pardon me for the condition to which he is reduced,

reduced, and of which I am innocently the cause? He has saved my life at the expence of his own; for it was impossible that we could escape our assassins; and what adds to the heroism of his behaviour is, that he defended my life on the very spot where I had placed myself in order to attack him. The reluctance with which I yielded to his challenge is no justification of my conduct.

Are you the marquis of V——, said I to him quickly? I am sensible that I risque a great deal by the acknowledgement, answered he; however, I will not be so mean to deny my name. I am that person whom you have so much reason to hate; for, your son, when he desired to be brought hither, told me that he had informed you of our quarrel, and the cause of it.

We got intelligence of it by another channel, sir, as well as of the reluctance you had to this unfortunate duel; and this, so far from degrading you in our opinion, made us esteem you; but, how —— I then perceived the marquis totter. Are you wounded, sir, I asked him hastily? I believe

lieve I am, answered he, setting himself down on a chair, but it is but slightly. I immediately called the surgeon, who found that he had a wound in the arm, and another in the thigh. They were only in the flesh, and he refused being put to bed, as I begged of him: he was desirous of being present at the operation, which was extremely painful, and which Northon bore with a resolution that is seldom seen in a youth of his years. It is the quantity of blood he has lost that caused the fainting in which he lay when you entered the room; and since that moment the marquis has never quitted the apartment, so that I could not get a full account of this unhappy affair. It was proposed to conceal it from Northon and my daughter, which I thought might be easily done. We are here as if we were in separate houses: Mr. Northon is not used to come into your apartment; you shall remain in mine with Eliza, and I will sleep with my friend. But how shall we prevent him from going to St. Germain's, where he expects to find his son? We were puzzled a great while how to surmount this difficulty; at length the baron proposed writing a few
lines

lines to my brother, in which he would say, that his sister's disorder being dangerous, it was impossible for him to return to his lodgings, and for this reason he must beg that he would defer his journey till the morrow, because he had a bill of exchange which ought to be negociated that very day, and there was no body he could trust with it but him : that he might write his son a letter, which he would order to be carried to him by a servant : that he depended on his care respecting Eliza, whom he begged him not to quit, and that he would endeavour to see us for a quarter of an hour in the evening.

I approved of this scheme, and was pleased with the thought of concealing the misfortune from my brother. As I wanted to wait for a proper opportunity of speaking to my nephew, I went out, in the mean time, to enquire after the state of Eliza. When I entered the room my brother asked me the news of Mrs. Erlac ; for he had not yet received the letter. I told him that I could not venture to visit her without advising with the baron ; that I had gone to dress
myself

myself in readiness till I should see him, and had not returned for fear of awaking Eliza, who had been in a sound sleep; but, added I, I cannot think of going, unless you promise not to quit her room. I would be extremely unhappy were she left to the care of the servants; and must desire, that if she grows any thing worse in my absence you will send to inform me of it. Yes, yes, replied my brother; this dear girl is as much my care as she is yours. Do you imagine there is any necessity of recommending to me vigilance in attending her? Go you on your visit, and be perfectly easy: this sound sleep prognosticates a speedy recovery. It was with the greatest difficulty that I prevented my tears from betraying me. Poor father, said I within myself, you do not foresee the terrible blow that threatens you; you flatter yourself with days of serenity, when perhaps you are on the very point of losing all hope that ever you will become the father of this charming girl. I hastened to depart, and on entering my nephew's room I perceived an air of consternation in all who were present, which filled me with horror. The baron, anxious to allay my apprehensions, said,

said, he has a little fever, but we could expect no less after what he has suffered. I drew towards the bed without speaking a word; and Northon making a sign to me with his eyes, I sat down in the marquis's place, who just got up.

My dear aunt, said he to me, I feel myself extremely ill: I have two favours to ask of you; one is, that they may not delay to give me the holy viaticum; and the other, that they do not leave me to die without receiving my father's pardon and blessing. Does he know of the condition I am in? Do I appear too guilty in his eyes to expect that he will look on me with pity?

He is entirely ignorant of your condition, my dear, and it is on account of his sensibility that we have concealed it from him. He is even preparing to accompany you on the voyage concerning which you wrote to him. Be assured, my dear friend, that if we were threatened with the loss of you, I would take care that you should not be deprived of his blessing; in the mean time, let us spare his inquietude, which would on-

ly

ly serve to render your situation more painful. Your condition is not desperate; however, I approve of the desire you have of receiving the sacraments. Instead of increasing the danger, they will lessen it, by rendering the mind easy. At the same time I called the servant who constantly attended him, and acquainted him with my nephew's desire. On hearing what was said, the marquis discovered signs of violent despair, and poured forth such lamentations as strongly affected us, though our sensibility might have been exhausted by our own sorrows. Northon, stretching out his hand, said to him with an air of softness and tranquility: add not to my grief, my dear friend, for my heart cannot refuse you that appellation, after all the proofs you have given me of the goodness of yours. I have lived months longer than I ought to have done. God is just, and holds forth to the world, in my case, an instance of his perfection; but I firmly hope that he will accept of my premature death as an atonement for my crimes. He was hindered from speaking more; and the baron begged I would return to his daughter's room, that my brother might be

at

at liberty to go to the banker. He lived at the other end of Paris, so that the holy and dismal ceremony might be finished before his return. I would gladly have assisted at it myself, but was under the necessity of remaining with Eliza; and if she should awake, it would be easy to divert her from attending to the noise of the people; besides, so many strangers lodged in the house, that some of them might be sick without our knowing any thing of it. My brother shewed the letter he had received from the baron, and I told him he did not think it proper that I should go out of the house. I gave him my orders, and as the baron had anticipated them, the equipage was ready to set out in four minutes. I congratulated myself on being able to conceal the misfortune from my brother; and notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion of those of the faculty, I still cherished a hope, which the goodness of God permitted me to indulge, that I might be the better enabled to discharge the office of attending on Eliza. While my brother was dressing, I went for a moment into my nephew's apartment: the physicians found he was grown worse, and

and the confessor that he was become more calm. I rushed suddenly out of the room, and by that means avoided a fight which drew tears from all that were present.

My brother set out in a chariot, and was obliged to stop on the bridge of St. Michael, on account of the number of carriages. Among those that waited, he observed the equipage of the banker to whom he was going; and stepping out to speak with him, the other begged he would return to the hotel, because a pressing affair obliged him to stay in the city some hours, and he promised to bring the money at four o'clock. My brother came back, and within a few paces of the house he observed them carrying the holy sacrament. He was immediately struck with terror lest Eliza had relapsed; and coming hastily out of the carriage, he went among the croud, when his fears were allayed by seeing them proceed to the other side of the court. Compassion induced him to go up stairs with the company. Judge of the shock he received when they stopped at the door of my apartment, and he perceived all my domestics
on

on their knees, in the first room, with those who carried the tapers. His valet de chambre, who spied him in the croud, threw himself in his way, to prevent him from advancing any farther; but nothing could stop him, and he rushed into my room. When he beheld his son expiring, he could not restrain his emotion, and poured forth such lamentations as obliged the curate to suspend the ceremony, that he might know who the person was that behaved so irreverently. He was told that it was the father of the dying youth, who had that moment learned by mere accident of the misfortune of his son. The curate, placing the holy sacrament upon the table, takes my brother by the hand, and having conducted him to the sacred spot, he spoke to him in so pathetic a manner, that he was oftener than once interrupted by the sobbing of the assembly. The amende honorable which Northon made to his father, excited tears a-fresh, and I say nothing of those which were shed by the marquis and the baron, in embracing this disconsolate and afflicted father. I have already put your sensibility to too severe a trial, and

yet I question whether the feeble account I give you, can convey a sufficient idea of this affecting scene. This is the Agamemnon of the painting, over whose face it is necessary to draw a veil, from the impossibility of faithfully representing it.

I knew not of what passed in the room, and it was a happiness for me. Who knows if I would have been mistress of myself, and whether my emotion might not have discovered to Eliza the secret which they endeavoured to conceal from her. This dear child had a sound sleep, and awaked free of fever, so that the physicians pronounced her to be out of all danger.

She was surprised at not seeing my brother. Is he gone without taking farewell of me, said she? Why was I not awaked? The baron, who was just entered, and endeavoured to appear composed, said to her in a jesting air; he has done you a greater compliment, by carrying his son's pardon some hours sooner than it could have been, had he waited to bid you farewell.

I must

I must here stop, my dear friend, my hand can hold the pen no longer, and the post is anxious to be gone. This first volume will be succeeded by a second less melancholy, for I have nothing now but happy incidents to relate. This prospect will make you bear up under your impatience, which I am sure you feel more strongly in the present case, than you did at a favourite theatrical representation, where, as you told me, you was greatly affected. I know that you will admire the hero of our piece; and as to the heroine, she has long had the happiness of interesting you. Could you ever have thought that she would be threatened with so great disasters?

*Continuation of Mrs. NORTHON's Letter to the
Countess of SOLMES.*

I CONTINUE, or rather conclude, the recital of our misfortunes, with such joy as people feel when they are past. My nephew lay forty-eight hours in the most imminent danger; and had not this combat sufficiently proved his courage, the intrepidity with which he beheld his end approaching, would

have convinced the most incredulous that it was not from cowardice he had declined the intended duel. At length, when an increase of his fever was expected, which, in the opinion of the physicians would cut him off, it diminished so much that one of them declared it to be upon the point of entirely ceasing ; and before night his prognostication was verified. The wounds had so good an appearance next day, that no doubt was entertained of a speedy cure, and in reality it was time that Heaven would take pity on us : I could not any longer act the part of the dissembler with Eliza, and I was indebted to her extraordinary prudence for the moments of tranquillity which her silence afforded me. These I employed in prayer ; and in this intercourse with God, I found such strength and courage as nothing else could give me. This charming girl perceived there was a secret which they endeavoured to conceal from her : she surprised me sometimes when my eyes were all bathed in tears ; and seeing clearly that I strived to suppress them in her presence, she affected not to observe them, no more than the profound melancholy in which her father was plunged. At length,

on the evening of the second day, unable any longer to support this condition, she said to me: my dear friend, do you think I have not courage enough to partake of your grief? Friendship knows not such reserve, and I have cause to complain of your want of confidence. My aunt's illness certainly cannot affect you in so violent a manner: some misfortune has happened either to Mr. Northon or his son. To allay her uneasiness, my brother wrote us a letter, which I here inclose to you, as laziness will not allow me to transcribe it.

*A LETTER from Mr. NORTHON to
Baron M——*

You have partaken so sincerely of my grief, my dear friend, that I cannot enough hasten to communicate to you my joys. I have again found in my son all the sentiments that rendered him so dear to me; and I have reason to hope that the eclipse which his virtue has suffered at Paris, will serve to establish him in wisdom during the remainder of his life. A thousand tender compliments from me and my prodigal, to all

that belong to you. I have made a long journey to-day, which obliges me to shorten my letter.

THE reading of this disconcerted all the ideas of Eliza, whose fears had for their object the health of the father, and the dispositions of his son; and we succeeded in persuading her, that our sadness was occasioned by nothing else but the illness of her aunt, and the languid state in which she continued. Her father and I never left her a moment alone, and by conversation introduced without the appearance of design, on the necessity of submitting to the will of Heaven, we endeavoured to dispose her for supporting the loss with which we were threatened. The baron was in my nephew's apartment when the physicians began to entertain hopes that were well founded, on account of the abatement of the fever. He staid no longer than to embrace my brother and the marquis; and without taking time to speak to them, so much was he transported with joy, he ran to the room where we were, in the resolution of concealing from us the better part of the intelligence. What force the passions of

of the mind have upon the body ! The joy which he thought to conceal, had made so great an alteration in his countenance that he seemed quite another person. Ah ! my father, said Eliza to him in transport, you have received good news, hasten to communicate them to me. I am come for that very purpose, said her father to her ; but it is necessary that you restrain your emotion more than I have done mine. I wanted to lead you by degrees to the knowledge of an event which is more fortunate than I had reason to hope : I have betrayed myself, and would repair the fault by keeping you in suspense, till the emotion that agitates you has subsided. People die of excessive joy, as well as of grief.

Eh ! don't they sometimes die of impatience, said Eliza to him with an air of vivacity ? (I would have said as much). In this case I warn you that my life is not very secure. You intreat me by menacing, little girl, said the baron ; you deserve that I take revenge of your temerity by keeping silent. However, as I am an indulgent father, I will not keep you longer in suspense. Know

then, that our young prodigal has given such proofs of his courage, that the journey to Malta is become quite unnecessary. This is owing to some circumstances, which have taken so favourable a turn, that we may reasonably flatter ourselves with having the pleasure of seeing him soon amongst us. Eliza leaped with joy at these words, when, with the view of moderating her emotion, the baron added: I don't know what reply to make to the letter which brings the accounts of this happy change: they ask me whether Northon can yet aspire to an alliance with you? and, by your looks, I fear that you have an aversion to him: speak freely, if you have any reluctance to an union with the son of my friend? I will never oppose your inclination. All the answer Eliza made, was to throw herself on her father's hands, which she kissed a hundred times, without speaking one word, so much was she oppressed with joy, surprize, and the new sentiments that had taken possession of her mind. Since you coax me, said the baron to her, come, let us finish our bargain; I will be surety for your obedience on this occasion, upon condition that you give me a
proof

proof of it. I desire that you will take care of your health, employ yourself only on agreeable thoughts, and suspend your curiosity concerning to the incidents that have happened. It is enough for you to know, that God has recompensed your submission to his commands, and that, unless some extraordinary misfortune occurs, which we have no reason to expect, we shall see Northon in this apartment before a fortnight be at an end.—I did not give him time to finish his discourse; being unable any longer to support the constraint which I had suffered since the baron entered the room, I threw myself on her neck, I watered her face with my tears; in short, I fell into extravagancies which were serviceable to Eliza; for the surprize they exerted in her suspended every other idea. I had left my poor nephew in a desperate condition in the evening; I could not conceive that one night could produce so great an alteration, and afford room for such confident hopes as the baron entertained. I was quite impatient to go and be satisfied with my own eyes, and yet I was under the necessity of restraining this desire. Eliza was not in a condition to be left alone, and

my absence would have discovered what we wanted to conceal from her. I am utterly at a loss what to think, said she: the profound sadness you have shown these two days past, with your present sudden and extraordinary fit of joy, testify very singular events, which I wish you would explain to me. Is it not cruelty to keep me thus in suspense? Oh! this is like the sex, said the baron to her, their curiosity is insatiable. They are no sooner satisfied in one point, than they become inquisitive in another: I assure you, if you teize me any more, I will retract what I have told you, and maintain that there is not one word of truth in it. I would even be guilty of a lye, rather than not be revenged.

Do not confound the innocent with the guilty, said I to the baron; I discover no curiosity, and therefore hope that you will not deprive me of the good news. Was I in your place, said Eliza, I think I could easily refrain from asking any questions: you undoubtedly know more of the matter than I do; but it does not signify, let us change our conversation to some other subject.

ject. I feel myself strong enough now to get up : this is Sunday ; shall I not be permitted to go to mass ! We must ask the physician concerning that, said the baron : till he comes I advise Mrs. Northon to go to church. Upon the supposition that you are thought to be in a state for going out, she would be unhappy with the fear lest any accident should happen to you.

How much am I obliged to the baron for his kind attention. I entertain no doubt of the reality of his hopes ; I am only afraid that his affection makes him exaggerate them. The countenances of all whom I have seen confirm the good tidings, and when the servants came to congratulate me, they seemed as if they were out of their minds with joy. But all this was nothing in comparison to the behaviour of the marquis : no, the transport of my brother did not surpass his. Northon lay in a sound sleep, which made me beg of my brother and this amiable stranger that they would take some hours rest ; for the latter, notwithstanding his wounds, had not quitted my nephew's bed one moment. The surgeon

joined me, and assured them so positively of the patient's safety, that they complied with our request. When I was alone with the surgeon, I fatigued him with my questions; and after he had repeated twenty times, that unless some unlucky accident happened, there was not the least danger of a relapse, I began to indulge hope. What were my sentiments of gratitude towards God, for the double cure which he had been pleased to work in the soul and body of this dear sick person; you can conceive them, madam, they are beyond my expression. All I can say is, that amidst the transports of my gratitude, I would myself have pronounced the sentence of death against him, had I entertained any apprehension of his relapsing into guilt; but I was confident that the cure of his soul was farther advanced than that of his body. I dwell too much on these circumstances, madam, they are tiresome to those who are not interested in them; but I am convinced you will pardon me for not omitting any of them.

*The Countess of SOLMES's answer to Mrs.
NORTHON's first Letter.*

How much am I obliged to you, my dear friend, for your attention in writing to me at a time when you might have been excused for neglecting to do it. You cannot imagine how unhappy I have been since the departure of my courier; I heartily wished that he had wings, and would have given all that I am worth to purchase them. You will be convinced of the truth of what I say, when you reflect on the friendship I entertained for all your family, which is become my own; and on the apprehensions I would necessarily entertain after reading the marquis's letter. Don't be offended at the interest I take in the fortune of this gentleman. I was persuaded, from his letter, that he was perfectly a gentleman, and have a great regard for people of that sort; for they are very seldom to be met with. As soon as I saw him, I conceived great hope that he would rid you of Erlac, which afforded me infinite pleasure. I could not refrain,
how-

however, from regretting that he was destined to an union with such a girl. I do not tell you that I am impatient to know the issue of all these affairs : if I did so, I would outstrip my courier ; and certainly never did a fever happen at a more unlucky time than his. I cannot conceive how your troubles have terminated so happily ; and on reading your letter, I think I can discover that it has not been without some intrigue. I therefore reckon every minute till I hear from you, and I assure you they appear very long. I beg you will send me a full account of every thing.

*The Countess of SOLMES's Answer to Mrs.
NORTHON's last Letters.*

MY God ! what violent agitations you have suffered ! I have read over your letter ten times, and I shuddered every time, as though I had been a spectator of the incident which you relate with so much truth. I thank you for not acquainting me with the dangerous situation of your nephew, till
it

it was past; you have thereby spared me a great deal of pain. Do not conclude from this, that I desire to partake only of the pleasures of my friends: I declare sincerely, that I always feel a real satisfaction in taking upon myself a part of the cares that oppress them; but, in the present case, my inquietude would only have aggravated yours. This you foresaw, and directed your measures accordingly, which, for this time only were right; but had I been at Paris, and in a situation to have alleviated your grief, I would have considered your reserve as criminal. At length, my dear Eliza's troubles promise to be speedily terminated: it must be acknowledged, that for a girl of her years, she has experienced uncommon affliction, as you observe, and that the half of what she has suffered would have turned any head that was not endowed with the good sense she possesses. In reality, now that these evils are past, I cannot regret her having felt them: when prosperity is uninterrupted, we do not enjoy it with so much pleasure; and nothing makes us relish it so much as our having been acquainted with misfortune. As there is reason to suppose, that she is now
informed

informed of every thing, pray shew her this letter; though there may appear to be somewhat of an unfeeling temper in rejoicing at her sufferings, I trust that she will pardon me for it. Your silence respecting the cause of all that has happened, makes me imagine that you have not as yet come to the knowledge of it. Pray do not delay writing me as soon as you are informed. If your hand, by reason of fatigue, be unfit for the task, employ a secretary. You ought to judge of my curiosity by your own. My best compliments to all friends. Do not forget the marquis, whom, though I know very little about him, I love much.

*A LETTER from Mrs. NORTON to
the Countess of SOLMES*

IT is I who begin this letter, or rather this volume, my dear countess, but each of us must contribute to carry it on. I have asked for news before I sat down to write. They may tell me what they will of Northon's recovery, I am never free from the
 appre-

apprehensions of losing him, so deep are the traces which fear has made on my imagination. But, in truth, he is well, and very well too. When I say, therefore, that I begin a volume, you need not be afraid that I will trouble you with disagreeable subjects. I shall resume where I ended my last letter.

The marquis and my brother politely yielded to our entreaties that they would take a few hours rest, and were so ready in their compliance that they did not undress themselves. They slept so soundly till the next day, that I scrupled to awake them, and had they lain between the sheets, I believe I would have let them continue their nap for twenty-four hours longer. The servant who went into their apartment awaked them, by saying that Northon was going to eat of some soup, for the first time since he had been wounded. On hearing this good news our sleepers were immediately upon foot; and as there was no danger of disturbing them at their toilet, I popped into the room, and told my brother how long he had slept. The marquis had been so absorbed

forbed in grief, that till this moment he had not known me from my woman. Being come to himself, after knowing that his friend was in a good situation, he asked pardon for remaining in my sight in such a dress: it certainly was not suitable to his person; his hair was all in disorder; his beard, which was as black as that of a capuchin monk, was of such a length as to afford hope that he would be no discredit to the order; two moustaches were also springing forth, which, had they been allowed to grow, would have great merit. His linen was dirty, and in some places bloody, without his having once thought of shifting, or we of offering him a clean suit. The other parts of his dress was such as might be expected of a man who had passed six nights without putting off his cloaths. A large looking-glass, which he had not before observed, presenting him with a sight of his figure, he cried out, and proceeded to make apologies, as I have already told you. My own dress, and that of my brother, were little more elegant; and after jesting on the figure that each of us made, the marquis begged the favour of being permitted to send one of

our

our servants with orders to his valet de chambre.

I have said nothing to you concerning my curiosity to learn from the marquis the causes of an event which appeared so extremely improbable. You will judge of it by your own, madam. I was under the necessity of going to Eliza, who would have been alarmed at my staying longer. I, therefore, returned to our apartment, whither the baron came in a few hours after, to beg that we would dress ourselves. Are we to go out, my dear father, said Eliza to him? No, replied he, but you may receive a visit that will not be disagreeable to you, as I expect a man who brings news of Mr. Northon and his son. What is more, for I cannot conceal my secrets from you, he gives us hopes of seeing them here in three or four days. Northon has boasted much to him of your beauty, and it would be pity that this gentleman, who is one of his most intimate friends, could accuse him of exaggeration. Are you not quite wrong, said she to him? Is it possible that he has forgot my cousin! I am pleased with your jealousy, replied

replied her father; it is a good sign. But, in the mean time, dress yourself; I will go out to leave you at liberty.

He had scarcely shut the door when I observed some tears trickling from Eliza's eyes: my dear friend, said she, I am going to tell you my most secret thoughts. I love Northon; I will never love any but him. Did I not depend upon a father, to whose will I shall always pay the most implicit obedience, I would add, that I never will marry any other than Northon. But, notwithstanding these dispositions, what would I not suffer by giving him my hand, unless I were certain of his constancy! Can he see Miss Erlac again without any danger? Away with these ill-grounded delicacies, said I to her: it is not that Northon stands in need of your indulgence in this point, his cure is radical; but in love that is founded upon duty, the sentiments ought to be more noble and liberal, without which, a marriage, otherwise the most happy, might become a source of the greatest misery. Without doubt, it has been the prospect of unavoidable troubles that induced a heart
like

like yours not to enter into matrimonial engagements, answered she. You forgot what the baron told you on that subject, replied I. While I was of an age fit for marrying, my attention was too much occupied by you, to think of dividing the tenderness I had for you with any husband whatever. I have now passed the season of forming such an alliance: a woman of three-and-thirty is an old maid, who ought to give up all thoughts of marriage. Besides, I am sufficiently happy in having you for the object of my affection.

Eliza said nothing, but threw herself into my arms, loading me with the tenderest caresses, and expressing a thousand obliging compliments on my figure. She looked through the glass by the end that magnifies the objects. I would not have repeated this conversation to you, had it not been productive of consequences; but having told it to her father, the baron said to me that he would marry me. That will not frighten me in the least, answered I laughing, while I myself do not think of marrying. These are things which people never do but of their
own

own accord. I have in my hand the certain means of forcing you to it, replied the baron; but I hope I shall have no occasion to make use of a battery against a place with which I maintain a friendly correspondence: let us change our discourse to another subject. I am very well pleased with your dress, my dear child, said he, turning himself towards his daughter: you can do no less for a man who comes from Mr. Northon. The recommendation is not bad; however, I will add one circumstance to it. It is, that he is the man whom I would have chosen for my son, had I lost my prodigal, and that I will not have a moment's rest, till I see him united with the best and most deserving woman of my acquaintance.

On saying these words, the baron went out, and left me in such confusion as I cannot express. Most certainly this whim never entered into the head of the marquis, who has scarcely yet seen me. I was afraid of the freedom and zeal of the baron: he was a man of that kind that would offer me to his friend without any ceremony, and give a part of his fortune. He did not leave me
time

time to reflect on the matter, but in a moment returned, leading the marquis by the hand. I blushed greatly, and must undoubtedly have appeared to him as a very foolish woman. What is the meaning of this, madam? Is it that I would be in love with this man? That would certainly be very ridiculous at my age.

I must say, I think the man has a good countenance; you think so too, and that reflection is some comfort to me. You do him justice; I do the same; there is nothing in all this. I am not conscious of the smallest disquietude: besides this, his attachment to my nephew may account for any particular attention that he shews to me. The conversation turned wholly on the father and son, who he told us would very soon arrive. The physicians assure us, that the best balsam for his wounds is whatever affords him joy. The marquis has staid only a short while, and left Eliza greatly prepossessed in his favour: she speaks of him continually, which appears to me somewhat ridiculous, as well as my sentiments for him. On what are they founded, pray tell

tell me? On his friendship for my nephew. Eh! but could he do less than entertain such a regard, considering that he owes to him his life? You see how slightly we form prepossessions, and for the sake of a mere trifle overlook actions of the greatest consequence. Is not this the man who, at thirty years of age, has encumbered his fortune? In order to retrieve his circumstances, was he not desirous of uniting himself with a woman for whom he had no esteem? How horrible! In truth, I was very foolish in imagining that such a man could make the smallest impression on my heart. I cannot refrain from laughing when I think on it.

The baron remains with his daughter while I write my letter: I take this opportunity of beginning it, and will conclude it with an account of the interview; after which I shall resign the pen to these gentlemen to explain to you the enigma, for most certainly it is no secret to them. But had I listened to the recital of it, I would have been too long detained from Eliza; and during the time that Northon was in danger

danger, I could give no attention to any thing.

I was greatly puzzled how to inform Eliza of the accident that had happened to Northon, but by good luck the turn which our conversation had taken afforded a natural opportunity of introducing the subject. You know, my dear friend, said she to me, how much I detest duels. They are, in my opinion, the scandal of the French nation; for my father assures me, that in other countries they are extremely rare, and the consequence only of our bad example. Among the Greeks and Romans, the people who are considered as the models of heroism, they were absolutely unknown. We may, therefore, conclude that these single combats have no foundation in true valour. They owe their origin entirely to the caprice of one nation; and such prejudices only as have existed among every people, and in every age, deserve to be regarded as natural. For instance, the contempt of pain and death have been looked upon in all countries as indications of a great mind: all the world unanimously despise a coward who refuses to

discharge a duty from the fear of losing his life. Without doubt the former of those prejudices, produced by barbarism, derives its source originally from mistaken notions of the latter, which is an accident much to be regretted. Men cannot penetrate into the heart; and their natural malignity induces them to conclude, that the person who declines a duel is actuated merely by the fear of death. This is a delicate dilemma for a man of honour. He must chuse whether he will lose his soul, or be reckoned a coward!

My esteem for Northon is a thousand times greater since he had the courage to despise this prejudice; how few will think as I do? People in general will accuse him of cowardice, and this is extremely hard. I will freely own to you then, that, notwithstanding the danger to which your nephew exposed himself, I was charmed with his resolution of going to Malta. What can be the cause of his returning? I love him without doubt; but I love his reputation too. I hear that he has found an opportunity of displaying his courage without going to so great

great a distance; why don't they tell me plainly the whole matter? It enters sometimes into my head, that this wretch of a marquis has attacked him; that he defended himself like a man of bravery, disarmed his antagonist, and spared his life. If this be the case, I am perfectly happy; for he was at liberty to defend himself without transgressing the commandment of God: provided that his person and reputation are safe, I am easy as to any other consequence.

You will not believe me, my dear child, when I assure you that I know little or nothing of this adventure. What little I do know, I will not conceal from you, as I hope I may rely on your fortitude; besides, the danger is now entirely over. You may judge from our tranquility, and even our joy.

You have received a visit from the marquis of V——, the same person to whom Northon sent a challenge: he told you that my nephew had saved his life from some base assassins that attacked him. Northon

was dangerously wounded, we trembled for his fate, but he is now so much recovered that you may see him, if what I tell you does not make too great an impression upon your spirits.

While I was saying this, Eliza changed colour incessantly. For some time she was incapable of speaking; at length the tears gushed into her eyes, which I begged she would suffer to discharge themselves without any constraint. Then looking at me in the most expressive manner imaginable, she said: you promise that I shall see Northon this afternoon; if that be the case, he is in Paris; and, if in Paris, he must be in this house. Ah! I am no longer surprised at you and my father being so frequently absent, and at his constraining me to keep my room. But do not deceive me, is it a reality, or a dream? What! Northon so nigh to me, Northon a dying, and you could be so cruel as conceal him from me? On saying these words she viewed me with the most penetrating look, to discover if she might fully rely on the truth of what I had told her. This is the first time in my life that I have
felt

felt any distrust, added she; you must excuse me, my dear friend, you have cruelly deceived me: I do you injustice, I am sensible of it. Ah! my God, what dangerous emotions the passions are: I felt but a lawful flame, and yet, however innocent it may be, it has introduced into my mind a thousand mortifying and painful sensations. But tell me, my friend, how have you deprived yourself of the satisfaction of seeing me partake of your griefs? Eh! how could I dare to do it, my dear child? The frightful situation into which Northon's first letter had thrown you, laid me under the necessity of concealing the misfortune, which undoubtedly would have terminated in your death.

I know that I am a very weak girl, answered she briskly; but how trifling was the accident you concealed from me, in comparison to such as must have had the effect you mention. Were he, or my father, or you to die, I certainly would shed tears at the event. Did I find myself parted from you for ever, I would be deprived of the half of my existence; yet, such a condition, deplorable as it would be, could not

be productive of so much misery as I felt on reading that fatal letter. I would entertain a firm hope of seeing you hereafter; I would be confident of your eternal felicity: this very thought would be sufficient to alleviate the sorrow for a separation of only short continuance! For what is the longest life when compared to eternity? But I feared lest Northon would die with guilt upon him: the idea of seeing him the enemy of God to all eternity, made so great an impression on my mind, that I am amazed how I have been able to survive it.

Is it possible, madam, that a child of her age can give us such sublime lessons in Christian philosophy? If any profane person were to see what I write you, I would be accused of fiction, and it would not be credited that such heroism as I represent is real: nothing, however, can be more natural than this way of thinking in people who are firmly persuaded of the great truths of religion. How much are those to be pitied who look on such sentiments as extravagant! but it is not now time for indulging reflections which we will have leisure to make

make afterwards. You are impatient to know the issue of our adventures ; it is proper that I satisfy you.

The baron entered in a moment accompanied by my brother. They had been sometime in the next room, and waited only for a signal which I promised to give them. Eliza held out a hand to each of them, and afterwards kissed theirs, without being able to utter a word, so much was she oppressed with the sight of my brother. Consult your own strength, my dear child, said her father to her. You know in what situation Northon is : the physician assures us, that this dear patient is in no danger, provided that you appear to him tranquil, and discover no sign of being offended at his behaviour. On the contrary, it is necessary that you shew tenderness towards him, which I not only permit, but command you to do, unless you feel a reluctance to it : for if you don't desire me to retract the promise I have given him, your marriage will take place as soon as he is perfectly recovered. Answer freely ; I have no intention of forcing you to confer on him a favour which he rejected.

At these words, my brother bending his knee, said to her; I am deputed by him, charming Eliza, to make satisfaction to you for a blindness which he hopes to make you forget, by his conduct, in the future part of his life. Eliza made no reply, but endeavouring to raise Northon, she clasped him in her arms, and bathed his face with her tears. I wanted to enliven the scene, which began to become too affecting. My worthy friend, said I to the baron, I admire the good faith you have shewn, in permitting this girl to place her affection on my nephew, and let him see that she does so: these are things in which the heart cannot wait to be commanded. Not in loving, replied Eliza, but in acting in consequence of that sentiment. You would do me injustice if you thought me incapable of making such an effort in obedience to my father. You may be quite easy then, added I, with respect to the apprehension that she will have any reluctance in obeying you. But see how she takes the liberty to embrace her second father in your presence, without your consent: I never taught her to use such freedoms; I am quite ashamed of her behaviour, and

and will not pardon it, but upon condition that she embraces me half a dozen times at least.

My brother entered into my views, by pretending to be piqued at what he called my jealousy. When the conversation had been supported for some time in a jocular manner, he suddenly accosted her with saying; what is to hinder us from this moment paying the visit which we speak of making in the afternoon? What, in my night-cap? cried Eliza. This hasty exclamation excited our laughter: her father, in jest, reproached her with her coquetry, and taking her by the hand, said, that if she would not go willingly, he would drag her along. In the mean time, my brother went out before us, and we found Northon sitting up; who, from the joy that animated his countenance, seemed not to be so much altered as he was in reality. The baron, with his daughter still in his hand, approached his bed, and said to him: my poor boy, to do you justice, I must own that you are a great rogue; but as this little girl gives herself the air of finding that you are a very amiable

rogue, I bestow her upon you. After all, we must once in our life be guilty of folly: I thought formerly that you had too much of the Cato in your temper, but now I have nothing to reproach you with in that respect. I would rather that you commit ten foolish actions before you become my son, than that you should be guilty of a single one after your marriage.

After this fine harangue, the baron put his daughter's hand into that of my nephew, who kissed it respectfully, and opened his mouth with the intention, no doubt, of declaring his gratitude; but, the baron did not give him time. I cannot give over with joining this young couple, said he, for I consider the affair as completed: this marriage renews my youth, and puts me in the humour of making up another match. Is there nobody here that stands in need of my poor services? I have a lucky hand, as you see. You have no idea, my dear, of what is to follow: it had been concerted, and my brother and nephew were in the plot. The baron had scarcely done speaking, when the marquis advanced

advanced with a timid air, which I am certain he affected; for these gentlemen are not such novices as to be put out of countenance: my brother, whom I did not in the least mistrust, taking hold of my hand, presented it to him, without my being able to hinder him, as I could not possibly foresee what he intended. Judge of the ridiculous figure I made. You will be diverted with the joy of our young folks; I could join with you for one moment, but would not wish it to last longer; and I seriously own to you, that they would have obliged me very much in making choice of other means for producing this effect.

Believe me, miss, said the marquis to me, it is with infinite pain that I have been induced to make so blunt a declaration: it was my desire to wait till, by my assiduities, I might be permitted to aspire to the honour of paying my addresses to you. I see that you are offended at my forwardness: I will punish myself for it, by confining within the recesses of my heart the sentiments which I have been so rash as declare to you without your permission.

I remained for a while quite stupified ; at length I stammered out some words. Truly, sir, you do me a great deal of honour, but in all my life I never once thought of marrying ; no, never, I protest : I am content with my situation, I—— I don't know what I am saying, added my brother, interrupting me : I am now not a young woman, and that is the reason that makes me afraid to take a husband.—You provoke me, sir, said I to my brother with the air of a person that is offended : people never treat so lightly an affair of so great consequence. But after all, I am very foolish to view this piece of pleasantry in a serious light. I return to my first opinion, that you are only in jest. Ah, come, gentlemen, it has produced the effect that you expected : Eliza and my nephew are quiet, let us speak of some other subject, if you please. At the same time I approached my nephew's bed ; but casting a glance at the marquis as I passed by him, I observed him look so much concerned, that I became affected myself, and in spite of all my endeavours I could not conceal my emotion. The eyes of the whole company were fixed on my poor person : the
physi-

physician drew towards me with great gravity, and taking hold of my arm, said: I have as much sagacity as the physician of Antiochus: if he discovered by the pulse that this prince was enamoured with Stratonice, I can declare, from feeling that of Miss Northon, that she is in danger of falling in love with the marquis. In a moment, he was at my feet, my dear; they had resolved to procure my consent at the first onset. My dear aunt, said the wounded patient, kissing my hand, you cannot, without wounding my happiness, refuse contributing to that of the best of my friends: the baron has threatened to defer my marriage with Eliza, till the moment that he can conduct you to the altar in company with the marquis.

It is a real tyranny, said I, shedding some tears. Would you be indebted for my hand, sir, to the importunity of my friends?

We have had enough of jesting, said my brother to me, resuming a serious air. No, sister, the marquis would be indebted for it only to yourself: I know his sentiments, and
desire

desire to know what are yours. I will answer for his probity and his future conduct: he has purchased wisdom dearly by experience; we may rely upon it. If you have no dislike to his person; if you can oblige your friends without doing too much violence to your own inclination, permit him to make his addressee to you. Don't disclaim the sympathy with which he has inspired you, as your sensibility in his favour is the only thing wanting to complete our happiness.

I need not pretend to dissemble among people who are so sharp-sighted, answered I. Hear me then, marquis, I speak the truth, and you shall judge of it. You are the first man in the world for whom I have felt a degree of benevolence superior to what I entertain for others of your sex: I have never enquired into the cause of this sentiment, which I impute to the great interest you have taken in my nephew; and I believe it really is so; but give me time to examine into it, and be persuaded, that if I make any farther discovery, I will freely acknowledge it. Let me tell you, however, that
though

though my discoveries should prove favourable to the views of my friends, it would not forward much the design which you do me the honour to entertain concerning me. My reason, not my heart, will determine the disposal of my hand. Allow me time to examine whether I be fit to promote your happiness, or can reasonably hope that you will promote mine.

You make me the happiest of men, replied the marquis.——Hear me, sir, said I to him, I forgot to mention one very important article. I have no fortune to bestow, nor have I an inclination to receive any: I know that yours will be very moderate after your debts are discharged. You ought to examine whether you would have the fortitude to support under very moderate circumstances.

I will not deny, answered he, that it would give me a great deal of pain; but only on your account, miss: I know that you would be of more value than any fortune; and since I have had the honour to know you, I feel that with you I could prefer a desert

desert to the gayest scenes of life. Is it necessary, replied I briskly, that men should force us to keep upon our guard, by the habit they have contracted of exaggerating, and expressing themselves with so much the greater energy, as their heart leaves it to their ingenuity to make choice of the words that they use? Pardon me, sir, I am wrong in confounding you with others of your sex; but not having, as yet, sufficient reason for making an exception in your favour, I must still beg that you will grant me time, and allow me to suspend my judgment. I will own to you, however, the moment I am convinced that your heart and your language entirely correspond together in what you have told me, I will be very easily determined.

I believe the baron had made a vow not to suffer the conversation to take a serious turn for one moment. Oh! truly, I exclaimed he, here is the finest ground-work in the world for a heroic romance. She will not be indebted to any body; he is for living in a desert; and must I be the only person who shall not be allowed the liberty of

Of following my inclination in my turn? Believe me, I have no notion of that: hitherto we have been but one family, and it is my desire that we remain so, *in secula seculorum*. Cursed be he that attempts to break the bands which unite us together. I have two millions of money and four children, and am determined that there shall be no inequality between them in point of fortune. Northon will bring Eliza the fourth part of this sum, who will give him as much; and should the marquis and Miss Northon refuse to accept of the half of this sum, it would be an offence that I never could pardon. I have this morning ordered the contracts to be drawn out, and would be sorry to think that all my labour has been in vain.

Ah! this is too much, generous friend, cried my brother, I wanted to leave to you the pleasure and merit of your generosity, and to my son the prospect of a moderate fortune; but these three years I have possessed riches, which were precious to me only from the hope of dividing them between my son and my sister: I was desirous of
waiting

waiting till these marriages should be concluded, before I made this declaration, but you force me to break silence. I accept of your bounty to my son and my sister; indulge me in the liberty which I allow you, and let us prove by our example, that whenever friendship is perfect, the pleasure of giving and receiving is equal.

Certainly, replied the baron, I accept of your presents, whatever they are; and I would do it with as much good will, though fortune deprived me of the pleasure of giving; for I am persuaded that you would have no less pleasure in enriching me than in partaking of my fortune. It is only a silly pride, under the mask of generosity, that can make a person blush at receiving the benefactions of a friend: I am free from such pride, and would be sorry to observe it in those whom I esteem; it would convince me that their friendship was of a different nature from my own.

Whilst the baron was providing against our refusal, my brother stepped into the next apartment and brought a small chest; taking

taking out of it a jewel box, which he gave his son to present to Eliza. He then gave me the chest, saying, your share is equal, my dear sister, only the diamonds are not set.

Do you know, madam, that this present, which was made with so much ease, amounts to four hundred thousand livres to each of us? I am far behind you, said my brother to the baron, but that does not in the least mortify me: I have a pleasure in being under obligations to you, and will never forget that you made choice of my son when you believed him to be absolutely destitute.

We stood motionless with astonishment. The marquis could scarcely believe his eyes, and could not refrain from crying out: Oh Christianity! you are accused of cramping the soul; but it is only you that makes men truly generous, and forms solid and lasting friendships. Ah, I confess it! I appear to myself so mean, when compared with you, that I am unworthy of being admitted into so respectable a society, into which I shall bring only factitious virtues, and prejudices
which

which people practise without loving them, and are ready to renounce whenever they can do it with impunity. A person is not far removed from real virtue, replied I, who acknowledges with so much ingenuity that he possesses only false ones: this stroke will greatly abridge my examination, and I would say that it has determined me, if I was not restrained by modesty; on pronouncing these words, I presented my hand to the marquis. A shout of joy, which resounded through the room, proclaimed how agreeable this action was to all that were dear to me. They all embraced me with transport, they squeezed our hands, and congratulated the marquis. I have never seen so delightful a confusion. The dinner, which was served up in my nephew's apartment, interrupted our felicitations only for a quarter of an hour; and though I have been a little hastily engaged, every moment confirms me in the opinion that I will have no cause to repent. At the desert, we made a reflection which should have been thought of sooner. Eliza received the box of jewels from the hands of my nephew, and had not opened it: this behaviour, so extremely rare at an age when
girls

girls are passionately fond of such ornaments, excited the admiration of the marquis. Perhaps the praise he bestows on the virtues which he sees practised, is natural to a man who is in the highest degree well-bred. But it is not so; it evidently proceeds from the heart. This is not the last apprehension that I will entertain on this subject; and I am certainly inexcusable for having broke through my resolutions. They perceive my fears, they chide me, and take the pen out of my hand. The marquis is going to write to you; but this he has obtained leave to do only upon the condition that the letter shall be read to the company. He says it is to contain a general confession. Oh! we shall see fine things!

*A LETTER from the Marquis of V—
to the Countess of SOLMES.*

I TRAVEL over a country quite unknown to me, madam; every thing here is new, surprizing, incredible. I was acquainted with the name of probity, honour, disinterested-

restedness, generosity, friendship, and a thousand other virtues : I imagined that I possessed the greatest part of them, but now find, with confusion, that I know them not even in idea. I have seen by one of your letters the kind prepossession you are pleased to entertain in my favour ; I flatter myself with the hope of being able to justify it hereafter ; but, in truth, it was entirely gratuitous and unmerited, when my good fortune inspired you with it. I imagined that this general confession would be sufficient, but I am desired to enter into particulars, and have promised to obey, whatever pain I may feel from the task,

I have hitherto been a man of honour, in the sense in which that expression is received among people of fashion. I was educated in certain maxims, which I have uniformly observed : this is exactly my catechism, and that of the people of my stamp : from these maxims you will easily judge of my merit.

To regard every promise as an inviolable engagement, except those made to women, which are of no validity. Never to transgress

gress the laws of decency, not even in transactions the most opposite to that virtue. To justify the most criminal engagements by the object of our choice; and never to let them be known, without using such precautions as may induce people to think that our intention was to conceal them, according to the maxim of Buffi Rabin :

Blest who the secret hour employs

In beauty's arms to glow !

'Tis love divulg'd, and not its joys

From whence disasters flow.

In this way, seduction and adultery are mere trifles, provided that the object is not uncreditable. To be very punctual in paying debts contracted at play, but to let others run on. To maintain that mankind in general are wicked, and would commit any crime for the sake of a trifling advantage. The consequence of this principle is, never to entertain a sincere attachment for any person, and to preserve friendship only in appearance. To endeavour to search into the hearts of other people, that we may
avail

avail ourselves of their passions for promoting our designs, but to keep our own impenetrable. To flatter the great, from whom we have any expectation: to practise politeness with our equals; but such a politeness as discovers a great esteem of ourselves, and a firm resolution not to suffer others to be deficient in it with impunity. To extol with conscious pride the advantages we enjoy, especially in the presence of those who seem not to regard them. It is better to be feared than be beloved by our equals; good nature is considered as weakness. Moreover, we are to take in a literal sense whatever a modest man says of himself, that he may appear still less in his own opinion; and that by confidently asserting our own superior merit, we may at length convince others of its reality.

To be extremely affable to our inferiors, who can have no pretensions to our esteem. This procures the reputation of goodness, which can be no inconvenience, and may on many occasions be of service. Not to affect irreligion, nor indulge ourselves in any pleasantries on that subject; to be
 suspi-

suspicious of bigots; not to marry young, nor consult our inclination in matrimony, but to be guided entirely by a regard to fortune and connections.

These, madam, are the precepts wherein I have been educated, and to which I have adhered in my practice; though some of them much displeased me, especially that which inculcates a general distrust of mankind. Unfortunately, till my last journey from Paris, I always lived with people who were very fit for persuading me that this maxim, however unjust it might seem to me, was highly prudent, and could not be too scrupulously observed.

You have seen by the letter I wrote to the colonel, that Mr. Northon had been represented to me as a mere bigot. This title imported, according to my idea, a cowardly or timid man; and had it not been for such an opinion, I would not have risked insulting Miss Erlac in his presence as I did. The preceding duel that I fought, and in which I had the misfortune to kill my antagonist, made me lay down a resolution to

avoid as much as possible every affair of the like nature. I was therefore truly sorry at being obliged to fight once more; and I own to you, that I did not sleep one wink the whole night preceding our combat. In spite of my reluctance, I feared lest my antagonist would get the start of me, and by four o'clock in the morning I was in the wood of Boulogne, as I had appointed in my letter.

As I write at the bedside of the dear wounded youth, and he traces every line with his eyes, he interrupts me. Your letter did not mention the wood of Boulogne, he says to me; you appointed our meeting behind the Chartreux: this is a circumstance that I want to have explained: for I could not conceive why, after fixing the rendezvous in one place, you was, next morning, in another at a great distance from it. You have read wrong, my dear friend, I answer Northon; I appointed the wood of Boulogne. We can easily be satisfied of this point, says Northon: your letter ought to be in the pocket of the breeches which I had on me that day. It was accordingly brought:
and

and judge of my astonishment, or rather horror ! this letter was in the hand writing of Erlac, which I knew perfectly well, though she had endeavoured to disguise it. Northon, who had never seen either her writing or mine, was easily deceived. What a crime do I see, says the baron ! Is it possible that such a monster could be found of the blood of our family ? My cruel niece had devoted you to death, to glut her hatred and revenge, without exposing her lover. What thanks do we not owe to Heaven for having frustrated her horrible designs ! But she ought not to flatter herself with impunity ; and if honour forbids me from taking public vengeance, her perpetual imprisonment shall preserve us from becoming the victims of her black treason. We were all so confounded at the enormous wickedness of this girl, that I was induced to defer my letter, which I cannot finish before night.

When I arrived at the wood of Boulogne, I stood at the distance of twenty paces from the high road, from whence I had a view of all who passed. I had been there but a very few minutes, when I heard myself called by

my name. The shades of night were not as yet entirely dispelled; so that seeing a man through the trees, I never questioned but it was my adversary, and I advanced towards him in full security. I held my sword naked under my arm, and while I was putting my hand to my hat, to salute him whom I imagined to be Mr. Northon, a blow was struck at me, which I parried with my hand, and at the same time I perceived several men attacking me. Ah! traitor, said I within myself, murder appeared to you a more certain expedient than a duel. At this instant, I threw myself among some bushes, in the resolution of selling my life as dear as possible. I must have lost it a thousand times, had I been engaged with men of bravery; but the cowards that attacked me durst not venture within the reach of my sword. At the noise of our combat, a man on horseback galloped up, and seeing the inequality in number, cried to me, Courage, sir, Heaven sends you a second, who, if he cannot procure your safety, will perish with you. Judge of my surprise, when I recognized the voice of the brave Northon, who had scarce looked me
in

in the face, when far from slackening at the sight of a man who was his enemy, he rushed into the midst of the assassins, whom he attacked so furiously with his horse, that he laid two of them flat upon the ground, and protected me effectually. By two shots of a pistol he obliged two of them to retreat. The number of our adversaries that now remained was four, whose rage was increased by the death of their companions: for those who were thrown down quickly got up, and plunged their swords into the belly of my defender's horse; when the animal fell so unfortunately, that the half of his rider's body lay under him. It was at this time that he received his wounds, and he would undoubtedly have been killed, if fury redoubling my force, I had not instantly plunged among those cowardly villains, who perceiving by my countenance that I was determined to fight to the last drop of my blood, retired about ten paces, and held a consultation together, the result of which was, to take to flight. I now endeavoured to disengage Northon, and my strength not answering my desire, I invoked, as it were mechanically, the assistance of Heaven. My

prayer was heard: I observed two peasants who were carrying fruit to the market, and the sight of whom had no doubt accelerated the flight of the assassins. They assisted me in disengaging Northon, who had lost a great deal of blood; and while I was doing every thing I could to stop the hæmorrhage, one of the men ran with full speed to bring us a carriage. I had the presence of mind to desire that he would say nothing of the affair to the coachman whom he was going to call: this was necessary. This man, fearing to be entangled in some disagreeable business, was for returning, and even advised the peasants to leave us. But they shewed more humanity; and having assured this clown that the affair was not a combat, but a murder, as they had seen the robbers fly, the coachman was the more easily persuaded, as we wanted him only to carry us to the hotel ———, which is no more than a hundred paces from the gate. I may add, that the gold which I displayed to him had at least as much effect as my intreaties in determining him to lend his aid. Miss Northon has acquainted you with what passed after our arrival, but she could not inform

form you of the strange revolution which took place in my mind. I had suspected, and even accused Northon of being a cowardly assassin. His conduct now made me appear in my own eyes as the most culpable of men. This reflection, and the extreme inquietude which his situation gave me, engrossed all my thoughts, and made me be guilty of an indecency which I never was sensible of till this moment. I placed myself at the bedside of the wounded youth, without once reflecting, that my presence ought to be hateful to all his relations; and I passed the first five days in such a manner as if I had been intoxicated with grief. I had one lucid interval, when my friend received the sacraments, and this was the first thing that paved the way for the miraculous change which has happened in me almost without my knowledge. I had been witness to the death of soldiers, officers, men of the world, and philosophers, but I had never seen a real Christian in the last moments of his life. Northon shewed neither the brutal indifference of the one class, nor the false affected firmness of the other. I observed in him nothing of that anxiety for the success

of the means used for his recovery, which is so natural to a youth of his age: he resigned himself to the will of God with a tranquility which could spring only from the most lively faith. Penetrated with grief at the remembrance of the momentary eclipse which his virtue had suffered, he bitterly lamented his faults, but without any emotions of despair: his fears were moderated by his confidence in God. He seemed to behold death not as a shipwreck in which all would be swallowed up on his account, but as a port where his virtue would be secure. To this spectacle, already sufficient to produce a change in my former ideas, was added the heroic firmness of his virtuous father and the baron, which was more and more visible every instant. They were both so deeply affected, that it would be impossible to say to which of them he was the most dear. Not a single complaint, not a murmur, not the least emotion of resentment against me, whom they ought to have regarded as the author of their unhappiness: on the contrary, they endeavoured to console me, and make me consider the accident as a necessary consequence of the wise dispensations of Providence,

vidence, who knows how to turn what we call misfortunes to our greatest good. There was not even one of the sex which we have been pleased improperly to term weak, that did not give me lessons of heroism. It was easy to see how much Miss Northon was affected with the condition of her nephew : a mother could not have shewn greater tenderness : it was easy to perceive how much she suffered ; yet her care was less occupied about his life than his soul ; she resisted her grief, and was wholly attentive on preparing him for eternity.

This, madam, is what I perceived in a confused manner, so long as my friend was in danger. The moment that the abatement of the fever gave us the first ray of hope, these ideas became brighter, and affected me more strongly. I have already told you that I believed friendship, that agreeable union, to be merely ideal, and that it could not possibly exist among men who are governed only by self-interest. But I find there is a passion which connects men together independent of such a consideration. Every person, even the meanest in the house, seemed

to join in proving to me the reality of this delightful sentiment. It seemed as if the dear wounded youth was the son of the old domestics, and the brother of the young ones, so unaffected was the sorrow which these poor people manifested on the occasion. When I perceived the dishabille I was in, the baron sent me his valet de chambre, till my own should arrive. It was with the utmost difficulty the honest lad could shave me; his eyes were every moment blinded with tears which he shed through joy. What praise did he bestow on these two families! Not the smallest shadow of discord had ever disturbed their union. I have lived, sir, said he to me, with the baron these fourteen years, and am under greater obligations to him than to my father. He purchased me on his arrival in America, and at that time my disposition was very bad. I was addicted to theft, drunkenness, and revenge. My first master spared no pains to correct these faults; and I am certain that I got more stripes for them than there are hairs on my head. I hated him so much, that I believe I could have consented to be burnt alive, to have the pleasure of seeing him burning with me.

The

The baron took another method of correcting me. I had been baptized; but, in truth, it was as a brute; and when twenty-two years old, which was my age at that time, I had so wrong an idea of the Christian religion that I held it in abhorrence. That God of whom they preached, appeared to me to be unjust; I hated him. So then, said I to myself, he has made two laws. By the one, he permits my master to be cruel and barbarous to me: by the other, he commands me to love and obey him. Oh! this cannot be. These Europeans impose upon us; or, if what they say of their God be true, it is their duty to love him, because he loads them with his goodness: but those who, like me, are reduced to such horrible wretchedness, ought to detest him. These were my ideas when I was sold to the baron. My new master resembled in nothing those that I had formerly been with. He exacted no duty under the pretence of religion, which he did not practise himself. He called us together to instruct us, and said that we were his brethren, his children; that our souls were as precious in the eyes of God as his; that we were bought

with the blood of Jesus Christ; that in Heaven we would no longer be slaves, but his companions and friends; that to obtain Heaven it was necessary we should do our duty upon earth; that our duty was to work and obey him, or those who were in his place, and to be mild and charitable towards each other; that his duty was to love us, not to oppress us with labour, to maintain us, to take care of us in sickness, to teach us to pray to God, and to correct our faults. All that he said, I repeat it to you, he practised. He allowed us time to rest ourselves; we were at liberty to carry to him our complaints, and to communicate to him our grievances. If they were well founded, he punished those who ill treated us. If at any time he was under the necessity of chastizing us for some fault, we could plainly see that he was sorry for it. If we happened to be sick, he served us with such diligence, as proved that he entertained a firm persuasion of a future life, in which God would recompence him. What shall I say to you, sir? His words and actions inspired us with profound respect for a religion which procured us so great advantages; which, on the

the one hand, put so great a difference between my first master and my last; which on the other, extinguished the difference in point of condition between the master and the slave, since ours regarded us as his brethren, and treated us as such; we firmly resolved to live like good Christians. I had scarce formed this resolution, when I found such facility in correcting myself as I could not have dared to hope for. I gained insensibly the friendship of my master, and became so happy, that I would not exchange my slavery for freedom. I refused the latter every time that my master offered to emancipate me: death alone will separate me from him; and if I should be so unfortunate as to survive him, I will vow to his children the same services and fidelity that I have performed to him.

If this speech was not the most eloquent I ever heard in my life, I can at least assure you, madam, that it has been the most efficacious, and that it has determined me to seek the same remedy for my passions which this honest lad has made use of for moderating his. I was secretly ashamed to find in
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a mulatto a person who was more a man than myself, a philosopher content with his condition, a heart that tasted the inestimable pleasure of a real attachment, confidence, and friendship; a pleasure which till this time I considered as merely chimerical. This man had nothing he could call his own, not even his body, yet he felt no want. Let people, said I within myself, talk no more of those famous universities, where they pretend to teach the art of thinking justly, of reasoning, and of being happy: it is Christianity alone that makes real philosophers. It forms them such in every condition of life; among the simple and ignorant, as well as among those who pique themselves on their talents and understanding: it is the only school in which hereafter I will study. This American has taught me more by one lesson than all my professors.

I reflected afterwards on the difficulties of my enterprize, and shuddered with the fear of not being able to surmount them. I conceived that the first step necessary to be taken for becoming a Christian, was to pay my debts. There scarcely remained so much
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of my estate as was sufficient for that purpose. I had reckoned upon an advantageous marriage for setting my affairs right; but I changed my opinion with respect to the signification of this word. A great fortune, illustrious birth, beauty, talents, and graces, no longer appeared to me sufficient for rendering the married state happy: the objects for which I now became solicitous was the virtues, and those too of the noblest kind: where was I to seek for them? I had need to find in my wife a friend who could instruct me, and confirm me in my good resolutions. I was conscious that my feeble virtue would meet with difficulty in preserving itself untainted by the great world. Besides, I was not in a condition to appear suitably to my rank; and what woman would have the fortitude to accompany me into a retreat, which was necessary for me on every account?

I was lost in these ideas, when Miss Northon, who imagined I was asleep, entered on her tip-toes. She has desired me to be sincere, so that I hope my obedience will extenuate in her sight the temerity of the
acknow-

acknowledgments which I am going to make to you. A voice seemed to me to speak from the bottom of my heart, which said, behold the only woman who can make you happy ; she, whose equal is not to be found among ten thousand. Upon my honour, I had not as yet looked attentively at her, and had I been asked whether she was brown or fair, I could not have answered the question ; so I could not suspect it was love that inspired me with this idea. The impossibility of realizing the happiness which was presented to me, drew from me a sigh, which she did not fail to observe ; for she said in a low voice to her nephew, this poor marquis certainly labours under great anxiety of mind, as he seems to be uneasy even in his sleep. Perhaps he was in love with Miss Erlac, replied Northon, and who knows whether his passion has not survived his esteem ? You wrong him, my dear, answered his aunt, with a goodness which entirely overcame me : from what I have seen of him, he appears to entertain nobler sentiments : is it possible that a man of sense could think without horror of marrying such a girl ? I am persuaded, on the contrary, that

that he repents of having paid his addresses to one who is so unworthy of them; and I have conceived so great an esteem for him, on account of the extraordinary gratitude which he testifies towards you, that I would be extremely sorry if he made a disadvantageous marriage. You can prevent his falling into that misfortune, said Northon smiling; marry him yourself, aunt. O yes! replied she, it is a fine expedient; but I must excuse this folly in a person who is just recovering from a fever. Had you a sister, I do not know but I would wish him to become my nephew; and greater benevolence I cannot express for him.

Had I followed the inclination of my heart, the first words which Miss Northon spoke would have made me fall down at her knees, in a transport of gratitude; but the conclusion of her discourse convinced me that I had acted prudently in suppressing my emotion. She stopped a little, and as soon as she was so far off as not to hear us, I said to Northon, at the same time embracing him, what have you wished for me, my dear friend! No, I am not destined to such
happi-

happiness; and it was the impossibility of attaining it that drew from me the sigh which Miss Northon observed. In truth, replied Northon, there is something so singular in this adventure, that I cannot consider it as the effect of chance. What! marquis, you seriously wish, then, to be agreeable to my aunt?

I then related to my friend every thing concerning which I have the honour to write you: he mentioned the subject to his father and the baron, and they all three determined on using their influence with Miss Northon, to induce her to an union in which the happiness of my life was centered. Prudence however directed them to make me undergo a trial that mortified me greatly at that time, but for which I am now very thankful. Mr. Northon, in concert with his friend, having taken me aside, said: sir, the idea of having a person of your merit for my brother-in-law, has so much transported me, as not to allow me the freedom of making a reflection which it is of importance that you make yourself, before we enter into any measures with respect to my sister. Perhaps
you

you judge of her fortune from the manner in which we lived at Paris; but know, that we are indebted for every thing to the goodness of the baron. He resigns to my sister the small portion of his estate which he left in her hands when he went to America. This sum, joined to what she inherits from her family, amounts to no more than twenty-five or thirty thousand livres: I have been told that you was looking out for an heiress; if that be the case, my sister is not for you.

Whoever told you that I was looking for a fortune, replied I, did not deceive you: I own to you with shame, that Erlac's fortune was more charming in my eyes than her person. In the way of life that I had chosen, it was necessary to have money; but upon the plan that I now lay down to myself, little will be sufficient, and it would be with a bad grace that I could wish for more, when after paying my debts, I shall not reserve so much as what your sister possesses. I mentioned this to your son, and am surprised that he forgot to tell you of it. The value of my estate is known, but
not

not the amount of my debts: people know in general that I have lived too fast; but they do not imagine that my extravagance was so great as it really has been. They think I still have twelve thousand livres of rent; I have had twenty; and miss Erlac was, with respect to this matter, of the common opinion: for my creditors were too prudent to publish a fact which would retard their payment, by breaking off a match that would enable me to discharge all my debts at one stroke. I own that it is base to deceive the woman we marry with regard to our circumstances: however, as it is usual for both parties to impose mutually on each other, I had no scruple on this subject, no more than in a thousand other points. New lights have now awakened my delicacy, and I would die a thousand times rather than be guilty of the smallest misrepresentation to persons so respectable as you all are. What is more, if I can depend upon my present sentiments, I would not, for the sake of obtaining the greatest fortune, impose on the meanest man alive. I no longer consider riches as the source of happiness; nevertheless I would regret what I have lost, if it
was

was necessary to procure an alliance with such a person as Miss Northon, who has a title to a much more advantageous match ; and this consideration would have induced me to conceal my sentiments, had not your son, who honours me with his attachment, informed you of them.

When there is no other objection to you than the mediocrity of your fortune, answered Mr. Northon, we are near the point of settling the affair. Repose entirely on my friendship for her, and my esteem for you. I am firmly of opinion, that in bringing about an union between you, I will promote the happiness of both : but it is proper to dispatch the matter quickly ; people marry more easily at twenty years of age than at thirty.

In vain did I represent to Mr. Northon the necessity of giving me time to gain the esteem of his sister, who would have reason to be offended at our treating of the affair without her knowledge. He would not listen to my remonstrances, and I was obliged to act as he directed. You know the rest, madam ;
my

my happiness has cost me dear, since I was near being deprived of my generous deliverer. Heaven grant that it may continue, and that I may never survive my virtuous friends. I have now no other wish.

Miss NORTHON continues.

No, madam, you do not know the rest, and I want to inform you of it. I yielded directly in obedience to my brother; he holds the place of my parents, and I owe submission to him. An hour after, I foresaw that I would comply, not only without reluctance, but with satisfaction. After reading the marquis's general confession, I freely acknowledge to you that I submit with joy. He is born for the great virtues, and I shall learn of him to practise them. I have promised to inform him of what progress he makes in my heart, and I keep my promise, as you see.

A LET-

*A LETTER from the Countess of SOLMES
to Miss NORTHON.*

Who could have desired, or even foreseen so happy a conclusion, my dear friend? My joy is such, that I shut myself up for four-and-twenty hours to read your letters over and over, and taste, undisturbed, the satisfaction of seeing you as happy as you could wish. This retirement will prove very troublesome to you if you hate long letters. The one I am writing at present will not be in the Spartan style. I have passed the night without so much as shutting my eyes, entirely occupied with reflections on your history. They belong to you, and you have a right to partake of them. I begin with congratulating you on your conquest and your defeat: independent of the unexpected fortune which the generosity of the baron and your brother has bestowed upon you, I do believe that you would have been very happy. I am in no danger of being looked on as a flatterer in what I say to the marquis's advantage; you know that he pleased me

me the very first moment I saw him, and at a time when I could not divine that he would one day have the happiness of pleasing you. He possesses all the qualifications that can make a wife happy. A figure noble and interesting, with a mind equally admirable. A tender heart, that sighed for the pleasures of friendship, even when he thought it had no reality in nature, and that would have given it existence, had that depended upon him. A man convinced by experience of the necessity, the advantage, and power of Christianity. With such a husband, a woman needs not envy the condition of any person upon earth. I have promised, or rather threatened, to send you my reflections; behold one which I think of importance.

On admiring the force of good example, I asked myself what can be the reason that it does not often work miracles? for, even now, notwithstanding the corruption of the age, there exists a great number of virtuous persons. Is it not because the rules of devotion being publicly instituted, the best actions are considered as works of trade, so
to

to speak, or as effects of hypocrisy. It is to be wished, I think, that the clergy did not confine themselves to the society of each other; that they lived as men of the world, and were not distinguished by any peculiar mode of dress (I mean so far as is consistent with decency of behaviour); that a devotee in brown, with a small coiff, should give alms, frequent churches, hospitals, and prisons, does not surprise us; it makes not the smallest impression upon us, and consequently does not edify. To employ the same expression which I used before, people would say of such a person, that he is performing the work of his trade. If, on the contrary, they beheld a young lady not afraid of sully-
 ing her magnificent dress, by going near the bed of the sick, and performing such offices about them as seem incompatible with her delicacy and rank, oh! this makes a deep impression; they admire her, they enquire into the source of such benevolence, and they ascribe her conduct to Christianity, which only can inspire her. In this way, people are led insensibly from personal esteem to the admiration of religion, they love and practise it.

I wish, in the next place, that pious persons would speak less and act more; I mean, that they would enforce their exhortations by their example. They would do a hundred times greater service to their neighbour by performing one good work, than by twenty specious discourses. You might preach to your servants to eternity, of the duty of meekness, patience, obedience, and fidelity in the administration of your affairs, all to no purpose; they would scarce give any attention to what you said: why? because they will not be convinced that you love the virtues which you recommend; that you do not think them so necessary for obtaining Heaven as you represent them to be: they would imagine that you speak entirely from self-interest. Who does not wish for those good qualities in their servants? But if, whilst you are expatiating to them in the praise of gentleness, they see you attentive not to lose any opportunity of exercising it towards them, your regard for this virtue contributes to the happiness of their life. They naturally love it, because it procures them so great an advantage, and they wish that all those with whom they live would practise

practise it. But when once they sincerely esteem virtue, they become solicitous to possess it.

In the third place, I would be for making a distinction between the virtues which affect only our own private interest, so to speak, and those which are beneficial to society. The first, in my opinion, can never be enough concealed. Thus, if I was so happy as to be a devotee, I would not restrict myself to a dress of any particular colour, nor would I think it a meritorious sacrifice in the sight of God, to prefer a stuff that pleased me the least, and did not suit my complexion, at the hazard of being considered as a person of no taste. I would not teize either the mantua-maker, the hair-dresser, or the waiting-maid, about how I should be dressed. I would not let it be known when I said my prayers, so that I would avoid the tedious sittings in the churches. I approve greatly of the method of Madame de Maintenon, who let the public think that she slept till eight o'clock, though she was employed in exercises of devotion every morning for an hour and a half

before that time. I would endeavour to maintain an intercourse with God, by pious ejaculations even in the time of my visits. In a word, for the sake of edification, I would rather that it was said of me, *she is a good Christian*, than not, *she is a devotee*. These two words, in reality, are synonymous, though they are not considered as such by the bulk of the world.

With respect to the social virtues, I would never seek in the least to conceal them. Did a woman of my own rank come to amuse me with scandal against her neighbour, I would tell her without ceremony, if you had been so unfortunate as to commit such a fault, and that people wanted to inform me of it, Christianity would induce me not to listen to your accusers, but endeavour as much as I could to make them spare your reputation. I am certain that you would approve of my being a Christian to your advantage; permit me to do for others what you would be pleased with being done for yourself in the same situation. Let us shew compassion to the faults and foibles of others, as ourselves deserve their pity in
many

many cases. Had I the honour to oblige a friend, to do service to an enemy, or perform any other act which would redound to the honour of my generosity, good nature, or philosophy, I would avow that religion alone was what prompted me to perform it: in short, I would endeavour to correct the wrong notion that is entertained of religion, piety, and devotees. It is commonly imagined that these virtues respect only the immediate service of God: I would make it my business to prove, that the best way to serve him, and what is the most acceptable to him, is to love our neighbour for his sake, and to promote the happiness of all men, who are his children and brethren. I am persuaded that devotion of this kind would obtain much more credit, than when performed with long sleeves, and all the pomp of grimace; and that many who have been witnesses of the miracles performed by it, such as the marquis, would declare themselves publicly in its favour.

Lastly, there are certain faults imputed to those who are devotees by profession, which I would endeavour by all means to

avoid. The bulk of mankind are guilty of extreme injustice: they carry to excess an indulgence towards those of their own party, while they censure with the greatest severity such as have no connection with them. Should any dispute with a person the heritage of one of his relations; should the former be desirous of depriving him of a portion of his estate, or coimmitting any injustice towards him, they are not surprised that he carries the affair to a court of judicature; they even applaud him for it; the interest of his family requires that he defend the estate which he ought to leave to them: were we patiently to bear the wrongs which would be done to us, say they, it would encourage wicked people: they ought to be punished; the interest of society demands it. Let the same thing happen to a devotee of the profession, the clamours of his brethren resound on every side. The ecclesiastics or devotees are litigious; they love chicanery. Unhappy is it for those who have any thing to do with them: they would sooner perish than recede from the smallest tittle of their right: they hate the unjust more than the injustice; so
good

good an opinion have they of their sanctity, that an attack upon them is violence offered to Heaven. I repeat it, these clamours are unjust; but I would rather yield every thing than authorize them. I would not be for litigating the affair; I would cause an advertisement to be affixed at the corners of the streets, that I was desirous of an accommodation, and wanted to refer the matter to arbitrators; that if they forced me to stand on my defence, I would make so modest a use of the victory which I had obtained at great expence, that I would convince all the world of my horror for contentions, and the little value I put upon riches, since I would shew as much favour to my adversaries as I could, consistently with the duty I owed to myself and my relations. I would——eh! For God's sake have done, any other in your place would say to me, it is a fine time to be sermonizing on the very point of celebrating a marriage. This would certainly be a just remark, and I shall conclude with sincere congratulations on the happy termination of your troubles. If the value of any good is to be estimated by what it has cost us, your present happiness

ought to appear very precious in your eyes. May you continue long to enjoy it, and I soon be a witness of it; but the business which has detained me here increases: after successfully accommodating one process, I have need of all my industry and patience to avoid another that is intended to be raised against me concerning the succession to my mother. I display to my adversaries a courage which I really have not; for most certainly, I will not go to law. You will, therefore, be charged for some time with a correspondence which constitutes the greatest happiness of my life, though I scruple to claim a part of the time which you owe to your friends. But are they not mine too? Am not I one of the family? If what I demand be too much for yourself to perform, you have secretaries who will partake of the task, for you have a great deal as yet to inform me of.

You have not told me, for instance, how your brother could procure so great a quantity of diamonds, without the baron's knowing any thing of it, or even his own son. I would wish to know what will be-
come

come of young Erlac : her grandmother was my relation, and though but a distant one, I should be glad to know that such a creature is out of the way of bringing disgrace upon her family ; it would please me mightily to hear that she is in a convent.

I will not add a word more ; for, in truth, this letter is already much too long. I am of opinion that young Northon will fix the idea which ought to be attached to a word frequently repeated, and so little understood : *The true point of honour.* Religion can never enjoin cowardice ; for it is a vice. On this subject we entirely concur with men of the world. The only question is to know what cowardice is ; it is the avoiding to perform a duty through fear. They will likewise agree with me respecting this definition ; but they will add, through the fear of death ; and, on my part, I will maintain, that every fear which induces us to decline performing a duty, is cowardice, whatever may be the object of such fear. What ! they will not pardon a man for the fear of death, which is the greatest of all

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physical

physical evils, and yet they will allow of his dreading contempt and poverty, which are only imaginary evils? I must be blamed for flying at the sight of a cannon levelled against me, but they will think nothing of my being frightened at the representation of a cannon in painting? What contradictions! Is it possible that they can be maintained by people of sense? To end the dispute, he that refrains from performing a duty, through any fear whatever, is a real coward! Ah! my dear, how many such may we find, according to this definition, which is however very just? The more frivolous and trifling the object of the fear is, the cowardice will be the more shocking; the less it deserves to be pardoned, it will be the more infamous. This point being settled, let us come to the case of your nephew.

An insult was offered in his presence to a girl for whom he had a regard, but who had drawn the affront upon herself, and who, by receiving his visit in the night, and without the knowledge of her mother, had degraded herself to the rank of those
women

women who have no right to expect delicate treatment ; this greatly extenuates the offence. But whatever the woman may be who is abused in the presence, or rather the company of a man, custom requires that he demands satisfaction, and no other than that of fighting ; he that declines such a combat, is exposed to the derision of all who call themselves gentlemen. On the other hand, God and the king forbid fighting ; to obey them is an indispensable duty. He then who violates these essential duties, through the fear of imaginary evils, such as unmerited contempt ; he, I say, must be regarded as a coward, that startles at his shadow, and places the point of honour in ingratitude towards God, and rebellion against the king. He who, on the contrary, has the courage to despise prejudice, will not be afraid of death, I am certain ; and of this I have a proof in the behaviour of your nephew, who exposed his life to a danger which it was not probable he could escape ; who exposed himself for a stranger ; who did not recoil even when he discovered that the stranger was his enemy, but defended him at the hazard of his life. Oh !

this is real bravery, this is the true point of honour. I acknowledge that this kind of bravery is more difficult to be acquired than the other ; so that, madam, let us talk as we please, we will not bring it into fashion.

*A LETTER from Young NORTHON to
the Countess of SOLMES.*

I WOULD be the most ungrateful man in the world, did I not devote the first exercise of my pen to returning you thanks for the tender concern you have taken on my account : you have lamented my misconduct with tears that are precious to me ; you have nevertheless entertained hope while there appeared to be no foundation for it ; and, without doubt, the prayers which you offered to Heaven in my behalf, have drawn down its mercy upon me. Once more, madam, what thanks do I not owe you ! I would have taken the liberty of writing, though I had no other motive than to offer them ; but, at present, another reason concurs

curs to make me do it. You bestow too great encomiums on my conduct in the unlucky affair which has ended much more happily than I had reason to expect: I was in the most disagreeable situation that could be; and I had, I may say, lost the right of acting as became a Christian on this occasion.

Supposing that I had never been so unfortunate as to forget my duties, I would have taken care of quitting my country for an action which I would be proud to have performed, had it not been prohibited in every case; and to tell you the plain truth, I would have blushed for not being ashamed of it. Were I in a strange country where it was reckoned honourable to defraud, and deprive another of his property, could I consider my regard for justice, and my horror of a lye, as a shameful thing? No, certainly; and if I were desirous of being esteemed by the small number of honest persons who might be among such a perverse people, I would incur the public contempt to procure their friendship. This is precisely the conduct I would have observed in
France

France in any other situation. To fight, without being forced to it by one's duty, is the behaviour of a fool, of a bad Christian, and a rebel: it is robbing our country to which we owe our life. Who sees not that it is glorious to avoid such excesses? and, as you have well observed, none but a coward can dread the contempt of those whom he despises. Three months before I forgot my duty I would have refused a challenge, had it been offered even in the midst of the most numerous assembly; and after this refusal, I would not have thought there was any reason for going to Malta, merely to convince fools that they formed a wrong opinion of me, in imputing my behaviour to the fear of death. Once more, of what consequence to me is the opinion of those whose esteem can be acquired only by such actions as make us forfeit the regard of all sensible people? Unfortunately, I was in a very different dilemma, as I have had the honour to tell you: I had overlooked essential duties; I had quitted my father's house; and it was known to many, that I was determined to dispose of my hand without his consent, nay even against his inclination.

nation. A man that had formed such criminal resolutions, could with a very bad grace alledge motives of conscience, when the question was only about committing another crime. It is true, that the moment I resolved on breaking the engagement I had made with the marquis, I detested the misconduct of which I had been guilty; and the same motive that urged me to renounce my criminal course of life, likewise restrained me from fighting the duel; but my faults were public, and my repentance known only to God. They might reasonably impute my refusal of the combat to cowardice; and had this been really my motive, I would have deserved their contempt. But I maintain, that a man of honour, who is insensible of this contempt, when ill-founded, cannot push delicacy too far for vindicating his reputation, when, by misconduct, he has had the misfortune to justify the disadvantageous opinion formed of him. I proposed going to Malta, therefore, with the view of undeceiving people of honour in their notions of me; but I do not know that such a step would have had the effect; for the action would be considered as proceeding

ceeding from despair, which sometimes forces the greatest poltroons to behave with the appearance of magnanimity. God of his infinite goodness, has furnished me with a shorter way of vindicating my reputation; by which I have also gained a friend who is as dear to me as myself, and was so even before the alliance that is to unite us was projected. Add to all these advantages, what your goodness gives me a title to hope for, the continuation of a friendship which I would merit, was it the price of the most sincere and respectful sentiments with which I shall ever be, madam,

Your's, &c.

*A LETTER from Miss NORTON to the
Countess of SOLMES.*

I ASSURE you, madam, that you might have filled four pages more with your *I would*, without my being tired of the subject. The marriages which we are to celebrate in a few days are not of the kind that require the whole time to prepare for them,
and

and they leave us leisure enough to read your excellent and agreeable letters. What is yet more, we have even time to discourse of them, and you shall have the result of our conversation, which is (I hope you will not be offended) a small critique on one of your *I would's*. I am certain that the expression has not rightly conveyed your sentiment; however, to keep to the text of your letter, people who do not know you so well as I do might imagine, from what you say with respect to the church, that you are really of a persuasion between Christianity and Deism. I entertain the same opinion with you in regard to the long meditations which certain devotees affect in the church, and which they ought to reserve for their closets; but this Madame de Maintenon, who employed herself an hour and a half at prayers before she opened her door in the morning, appeared publicly among the faithful as often as her health and the duties of her situation would permit her. We ought, for the sake of example, to attend the parish church regularly every day that is set apart for public worship; and nothing but the most invincible

ble

ble reasons should prevent us from likewise daily hearing mass. I know that you scarce ever fail in this duty when you are in health, and that the curate sees you a constant auditor at his sermons. This I have told to our gentlemen, and we all conclude, it is not in this kind of duty that you wish devotees to alter their conduct, but in the affectation of resorting to the church alone, at hours not appropriated to religious exercises. I throw myself at your knees to beg pardon for my critique; and that you may forget it, I will enter into a detail of the preparations for our entertainments. This day fortnight the two marriages will be solemnized: we wait for the time with a joy that is serene, and does not prevent the young folks from attending to the preparations, which are somewhat of a singular kind.

I have desired my brother to give you a full account of the beneficent act by which he came to the possession of so great a quantity of diamonds, and his letter will accompany this.

The

The baron, who regards the day of his daughter's marriage as the happiest of his life, was vexed at not having friends at Paris whom he might invite to the entertainments which he intended to give. The pleasure, said he, cannot be relished but in proportion as it is diffused among a great number of guests. I am much of your opinion, said Eliza embracing him; and during the three months that we have spent at Paris before your arrival, I have made some friends who will be company to us, and partake of our entertainments. The baron, who took his daughter's discourse in a literal sense, answered her; you amaze me; I could not have imagined that in your aunt's company you would meet with a single person worthy of being called your friend, and yet you give me to understand that you have several. Eliza, smiling and kissing her father's hand, said to him; it is not at my aunt's house that I have become acquainted with those I speak of. Ah, my dear father, you have treated me as a spoiled child since your arrival at Paris: I have scarce had time to form a wish before your goodness satisfied it: you have allowed me
to

to consider you as a friend to whom I might communicate my thoughts, and even ask questions of you, without the danger of giving offence. Do not be displeased then, at what I am to say to you. There are some customs from which people never depart, or at least very seldom : one of these is, that the expence of a marriage is proportional to the fortune of the parties : supposing you had a great number of acquaintances here, what sum would you devote to entertain them ? How much would my wedding cloaths amount to ? I begin to see through your design, said the baron, which will not hinder me from answering you. I would willingly spend five hundred Louis d'ors on entertainments, and I always intended to lay out fifty thousand livres for your cloaths. I would have doubled this sum for diamonds ; but few women at court will have so large a quantity as you, so that this article may be retrenched. Very well, my dear father, this will not prevent your happy daughter from being in a condition to make a number of friends partake of her joy, if you will give her the money which you intended for the entertainments
and

and cloaths. My own joy is complete, since by your orders, I have already expended a handsome sum for these purposes. Allow me to retrench a superfluous luxury in order to establish for myself a fund in the other world. My time is so short here that I ought to be diligent in preparing for a future state. Really my daughter is so old, said the baron, that she has not a moment to loose: she will very soon be seventeen, which is an age that borders on decrepitude. What shall I say then, who have passed more than the half of my life? Eh! who has employed it better than you for obtaining that which will last through all eternity, said my brother interrupting him? Has not every one of your actions been a good work? I have a mind to imitate the marquis, said the baron, and make my general confession to you. I have done several beneficent actions in my life, but very few that deserve the name which you give them. I take pleasure in making people happy, because, as I already told you, I do not love to be the only contended person among a number of people whose dejected countenances bespeak their misfortunes. Their misery

misery and chagrin take hold of my heart, and it is natural that we should endeavour to divest ourselves of anxiety. I have oftener than once observed, that my Eliza entertains noble and elevated sentiments: if you join me in opinion, we shall appoint her our almoner. I am desirous of learning from her the exercise of charity.

Had you seen the amiable confusion that appeared in the countenance of my dear child, on perceiving that our little society applauded her father's discourse, you would have been convinced of the sincerity of her endeavours to persuade the baron that she owed every good quality she possessed to the education which I had given her. The result of the whole is, that her father leaves to her the disposal of fifty-two thousand livres which he intended to apply to luxury and pleasure. The marquis looked at me, and seemed to say; ah! had I not dissipated my estate, I could have increased this sum by joining my offering to it. I understood his meaning though he did not speak, and I could not help blushing. I would gladly have said, since the baron's generosity has
made

made us as rich as Eliza, let us imitate her example. I had not resolution to pronounce these words, and my face reddened so much at the thought of a fortune so dependent on another person, that I durst not dispose of a sum which was small in comparison to what they intended bestowing upon me, that all the company observed my emotion. My brother guessed the cause of it, and I was obliged to acknowledge my false delicacy, which so much mortified our common benefactor, that it was easy to see he had a thousand times greater satisfaction in enriching us, than a covetous person would have felt on receiving his presents. I have sincerely promised to him to renounce for ever that pride which was veiled in the appearance of delicacy, and this declaration has greatly pleased him. Here then is more than a hundred thousand livres destined to make people happy: the great object of consideration at present, is to dispose of this sum in such a manner as to procure a durable advantage to the indigent. Each of us is to lay down a plan for this purpose, and our little society requests to be favoured with one from you. I assure you,
madam,

madam, that our inclinations would prompt us to bestow several millions, as readily as a hundred thousand livres, which appears to me a mere trifle considering the many objects who stand in need of it. My brother is to subjoin a full account of the means by which he came to the possession of the diamonds that he has given us; but I must first say a word of Erlac. The mother and daughter have left Paris on receiving a letter which the baron wrote to his sister as soon as he had discovered the infernal project which her daughter had formed. We are endeavouring to find out the place of their retreat, and I will afterwards let you know the result of our enquiries.

Mr. NORTHON proceeds.

THE detail which they promised I would give you, shall be very short. An European, as poor in appearance as he was in reality, had been kindly received, according to custom, in the houses of several rich private persons: for the plantations being remote, the people are happy at the arrival

rival of a stranger, or rather a countryman, by whom they may be entertained with the news of their old acquaintances; and such a person may pass many months in the same house without being thought troublesome to the family. This stranger was seized with a dropsy, which made but slow progress on account of the strict regimen he observed; but his great temperance rendered him an unfit companion for his landlords, who spent the half of their time in carousing. After perceiving that his sobriety was disagreeable to them in general, he resolved to return to Europe at the hazard of dying on his passage, when he heard some rich planters joking on the niggardliness of my family. I ought to inform you that, notwithstanding the opinion they gave of housekeeping; my table was genteel, and proportioned to my income. Those who held the employment before me had pocketed a considerable part of the revenue, which enabled them to live at greater expence; but this custom could not justify in my eyes the extension of several privileges that were contrary to equity and humanity. My circumstances, therefore, were so moderate, that I

was obliged to be frugal, even had I been otherwise inclined. Nelson (this was the name of the European) thought my way of life suited his condition, and he begged to be received into my family. I have already intimated to you that his appearance was not such as to prepossess me in his favour; he even had something forbidding in his countenance, so that it was only humanity and Christian charity that could induce me to grant his request. He spoke little, and it was easy to perceive that he was naturally rude, opinionative, and passionate, and that either virtue, or his situation had forced him to restrain his temper, from the fear of offending his benefactors.

He passed some weeks in my house without speaking one entire sentence, or any other words than monosyllables. I could perceive, however, that he was interested in our conversation; and imagining his silence proceeding from the condition he was in, I endeavoured by my attention towards him to render him more sociable. In consequence of my assiduities, Nelson became insensibly more

cheerful, and took part in our conversation. I soon discovered, that under a contemptible appearance he concealed great natural parts, improved with useful knowledge. Convinced that Heaven had thrown in my way a man who was fit to become a valuable friend to me and my son, my confidence and attachment gradually increased, and were returned on his part with equal sincerity. He lived in my house two years, which appeared to me very short: but he could not have supported for such a time, had it not been for the care we took of him. I observed, with regret, that his disease was gaining ground, and could not but soon terminate fatally. He did not stand in need of being fortified against the approaching event; he beheld death without the smallest degree of discomposure; and after fulfilling every duty which religion enjoins to Christians in the last period of life, he begged to have an opportunity of speaking with me alone. He then gave me an account of all the misfortunes he had suffered. After being hurried away by the passions in his youth, he had come to seek resource in America. Several times did fortune raise him to the top of her

wheel, only to render his fall more painful and mortifying. He had every where met with fraud and ingratitude ; and was at length persuaded, that religion only could make any firm connections among men, because it is this alone which bridles the passions, that are the source of self-interest. For ten years he had sought for a friend, of such a character as he believed me to be. There was a reason, added he smiling, for my being many times duped. I could have gained mercenary friends, who would have pretended an attachment for me, from the hope of a rich succession. I did myself justice, said he to me, stretching out his hand : with respect to external gifts, [nature has treated me as a cruel step-mother; and self-love has never so far blinded me as to make me imagine that my character could compensate for the disagreeableness of my appearance. I was born blunt, passionate, and inclined to taciturnity, which last disposition was increased by the treachery I have met with. It was, therefore, only interest, or Christianity, that could procure me the attachment of any person, and the assistance I stood in need of under the pressure

sure of my disease. As I had naturally a horror for all friendships founded upon interest, I tried if I could obtain a friend through the means of religion; such have I found in you, and it is but justice that I now make you an acknowledgment for the gratuitous services that you have rendered me. On saying these words, Nelson put into my hands the diamonds, the beauty of which has surprised you, and would not permit me to testify the thanks which so valuable a present deserved. He died a little time after, and I carefully concealed the treasure he had given me, according to his own desire. He knew the baron only from my representation, and was afraid that friendship induced me to magnify his good qualities. I would, said he, that it were in my power to give you a fortune superior to what I consign to you; I mean a real friend. If the baron be such a man as you describe, your poverty will not prevent him from fulfilling the design which he professes to entertain respecting the settlement of your son. Then may you reckon on the greatest blessing, and such as is seldom found in life, a disinterested and real friend; but if he should prove so
base

base as to break his promise, I furnish you with the means of punishing him in a way that has nothing in it odious. These were the reasons for my silence, which was not founded upon any distrust of my friend, but upon my fidelity in exactly complying with Nelson's dying request. Allow me to add, that I was happy to educate my son in a moderate way of life, which might prevent him from falling afterwards into the dissipated course that is frequently the consequence of a great fortune; and if he was capable of deviating from the principles which he has been taught from his infancy respecting this subject, the disquietude which accompanies the abuse of riches, when compared with the tranquillity he enjoyed in a moderate situation, would naturally bring him back to his former habits.

We wait impatiently for your reflections on the application of the hundred thousand livres concerning which they have wrote you. Your experience, in which we are deficient, will be highly serviceable to us.

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